HUNTER × HUNTER

ハンター×ハンター

28

SHONENJUMP ADVANCED

Story & Art by

YOSHIHIRO TOGASHI

冨樫義博

I finally got this volume out. Thank you for waiting. I promise to work hard, in many ways.

Yoshihiro Togashi

Yoshihiro Togashi's manga career began in 1986 at the age of 20, when he won the coveted Osamu Tezuka Award for new manga artists. He debuted in the Japanese **Weekly Shonen Jump** magazine in 1989 with the romantic comedy **Tende Shôwaru Cupid**. From 1990 to 1994 he wrote and drew the hit manga **YuYu Hakusho**, which was followed by the dark comedy science-fiction series **Level E**, and finally this adventure series, **Hunter x Hunter**, available from VIZ Media's SHONEN JUMP Advanced imprint. In 1999 he married the manga artist Naoko Takeuchi.

HUNTER X HUNTER Volume 28
SHONEN JUMP ADVANCED Manga Edition

STORY AND ART BY
YOSHIHIRO TOGASHI

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Touch-up Art & Lettering/Mark McMurray
Design/Matt Hinrichs
Editor/Shaenon K. Garrity

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PARENTAL ADVISORY
HUNTER X HUNTER is rated T+ for Older Teen and is recommended for ages 16 and up. Contains realistic violence and mature language.
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SHONEN JUMP
ADVANCED
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SHONEN JUMP ADVANCED MANGA

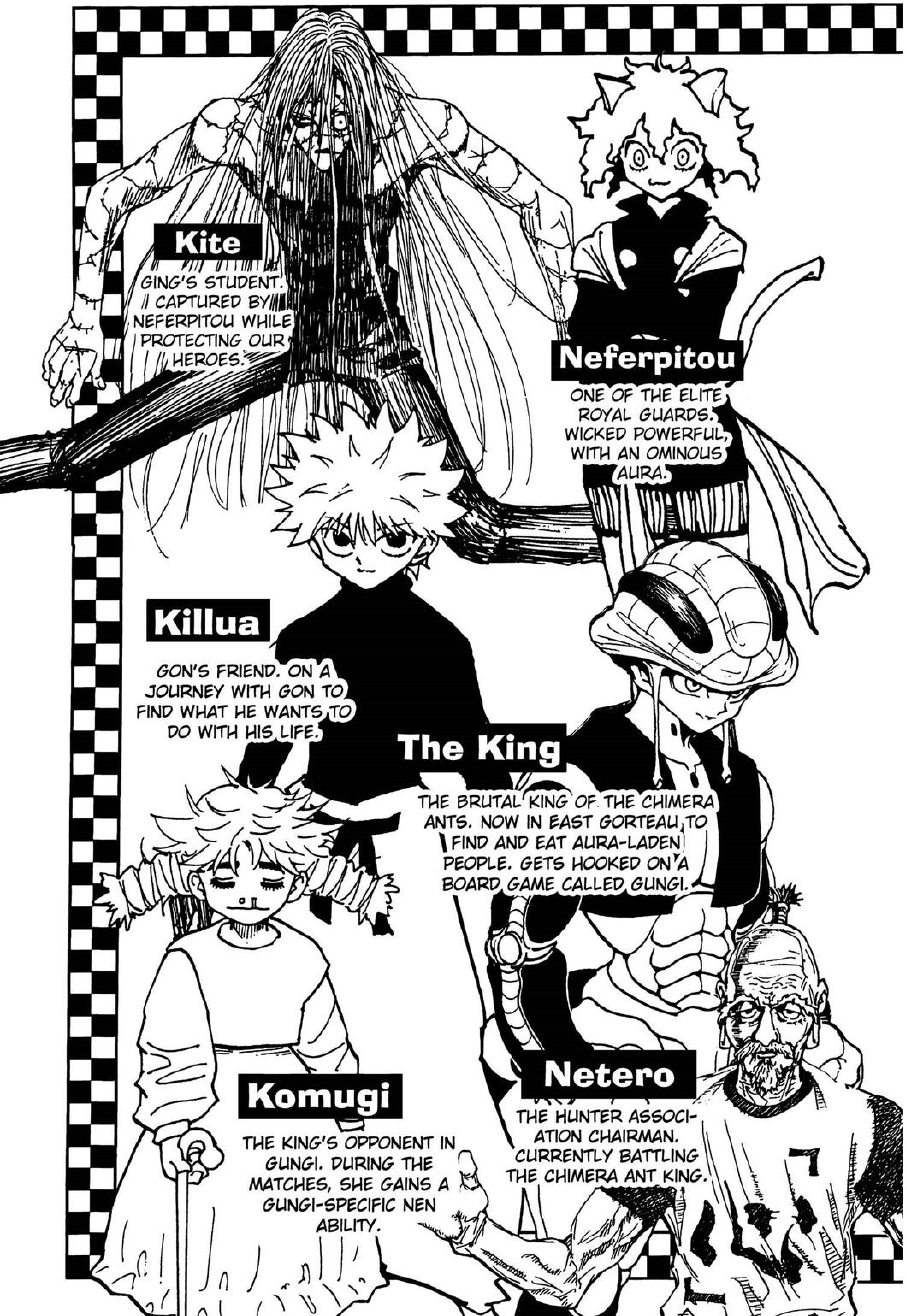
Volume 28

HUNTER × HUNTER

ハンター × ハンター

Story & Art by

Yoshihiro Togashi



Kite

GING'S STUDENT. CAPTURED BY NEFERPITOU WHILE PROTECTING OUR HEROES.

Neferpitou

ONE OF THE ELITE ROYAL GUARDS. WICKED POWERFUL, WITH AN OMINOUS AURA.

Killua

GON'S FRIEND. ON A JOURNEY WITH GON TO FIND WHAT HE WANTS TO DO WITH HIS LIFE.

The King

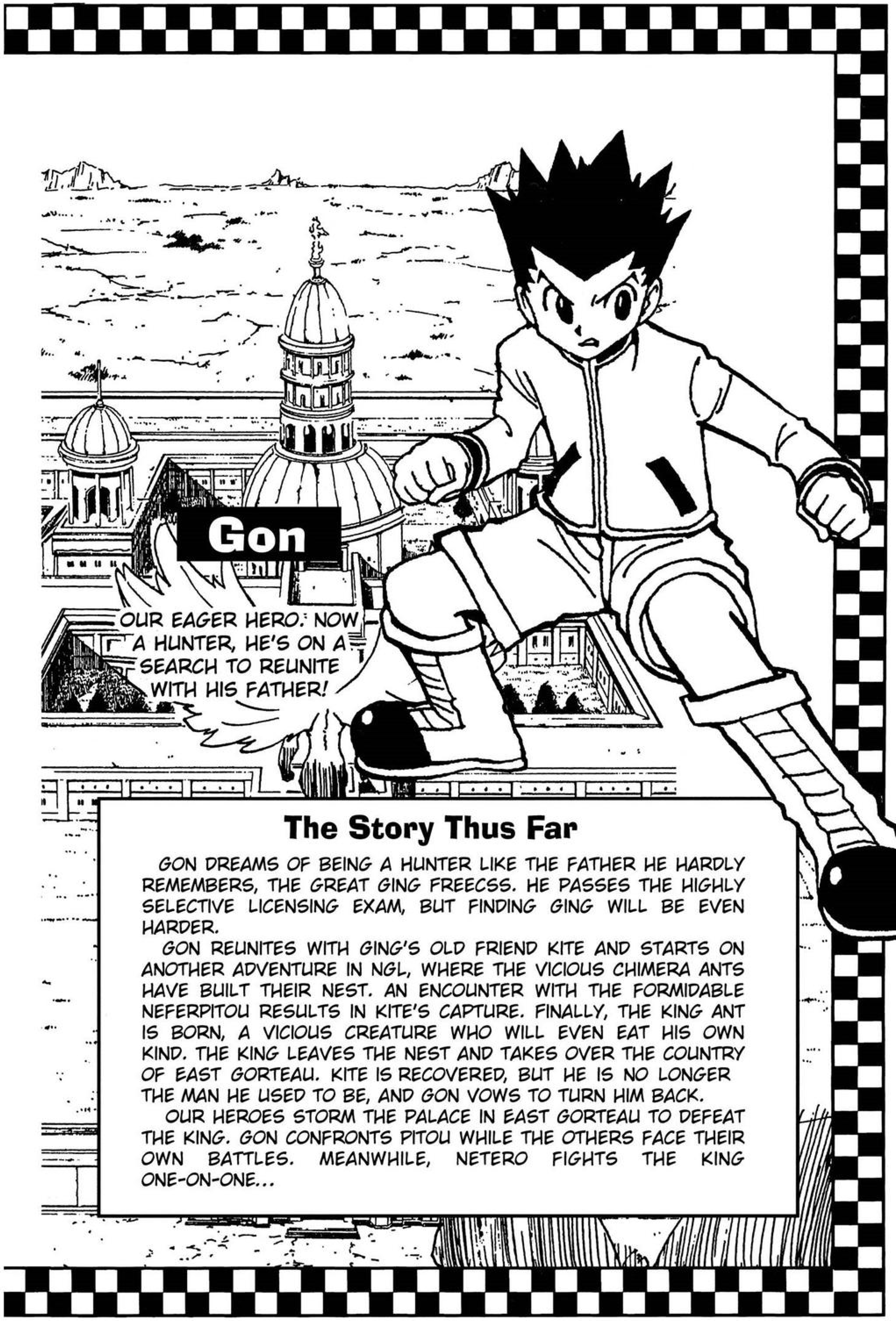
THE BRUTAL KING OF THE CHIMERA ANTS. NOW IN EAST GORTEAU TO FIND AND EAT AURA-LADEN PEOPLE. GETS HOOKED ON A BOARD GAME CALLED GUNGI.

Komugi

THE KING'S OPPONENT IN GUNGI. DURING THE MATCHES, SHE GAINS A GUNGI-SPECIFIC NEN ABILITY.

Netero

THE HUNTER ASSOCIATION CHAIRMAN. CURRENTLY BATTLING THE CHIMERA ANT KING.



Gon

OUR EAGER HERO. NOW A HUNTER, HE'S ON A SEARCH TO REUNITE WITH HIS FATHER!

The Story Thus Far

GON DREAMS OF BEING A HUNTER LIKE THE FATHER HE HARDLY REMEMBERS, THE GREAT GING FREECSS. HE PASSES THE HIGHLY SELECTIVE LICENSING EXAM, BUT FINDING GING WILL BE EVEN HARDER.

GON REUNITES WITH GING'S OLD FRIEND KITE AND STARTS ON ANOTHER ADVENTURE IN NGL, WHERE THE VICIOUS CHIMERA ANTS HAVE BUILT THEIR NEST. AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE FORMIDABLE NEFERPITOU RESULTS IN KITE'S CAPTURE. FINALLY, THE KING ANT IS BORN, A VICIOUS CREATURE WHO WILL EVEN EAT HIS OWN KIND. THE KING LEAVES THE NEST AND TAKES OVER THE COUNTRY OF EAST GORTEAU. KITE IS RECOVERED, BUT HE IS NO LONGER THE MAN HE USED TO BE, AND GON VOWS TO TURN HIM BACK.

OUR HEROES STORM THE PALACE IN EAST GORTEAU TO DEFEAT THE KING. GON CONFRONTS PITOU WHILE THE OTHERS FACE THEIR OWN BATTLES. MEANWHILE, NETERO FIGHTS THE KING ONE-ON-ONE...

HUNTER×HUNTER

Volume 28

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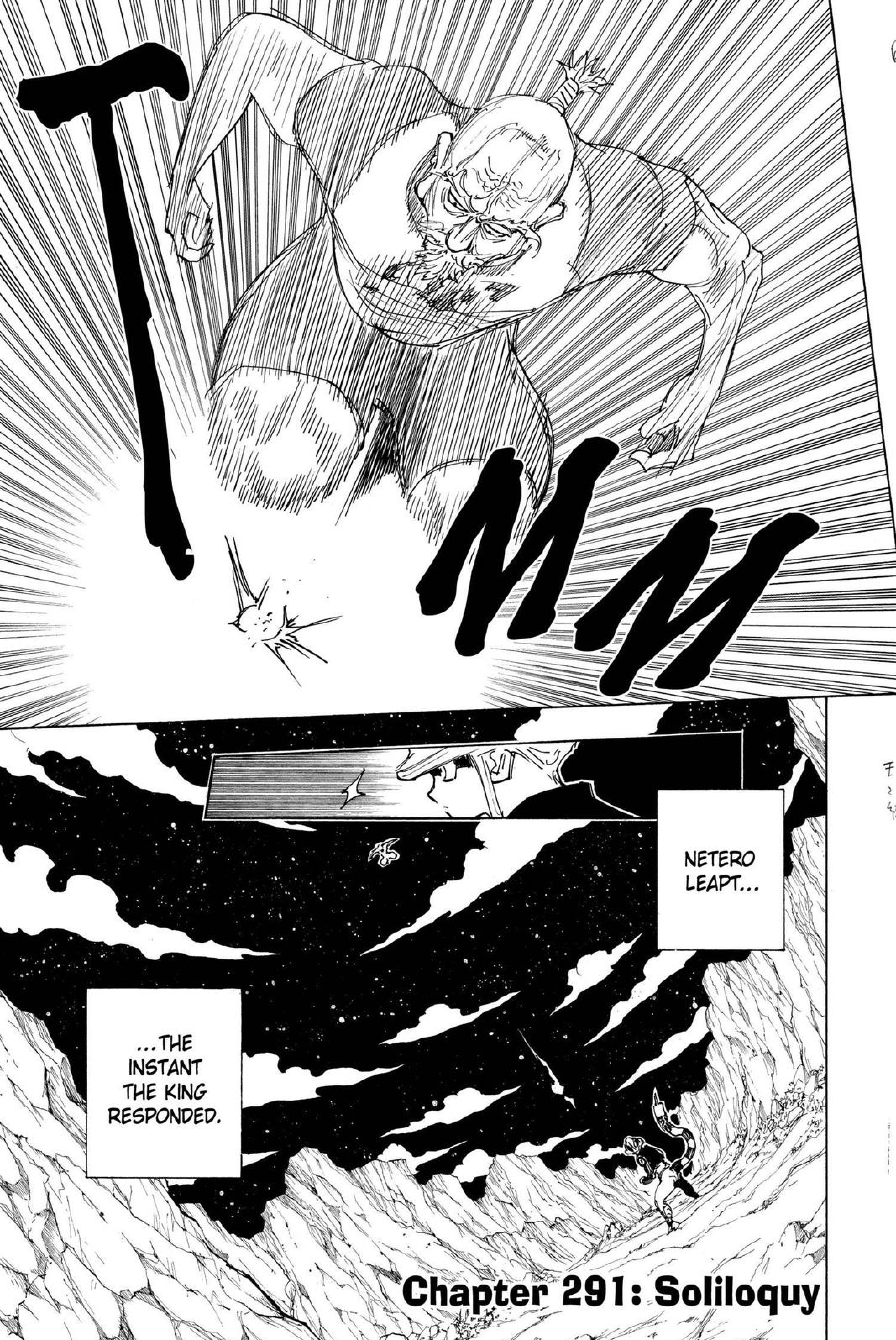
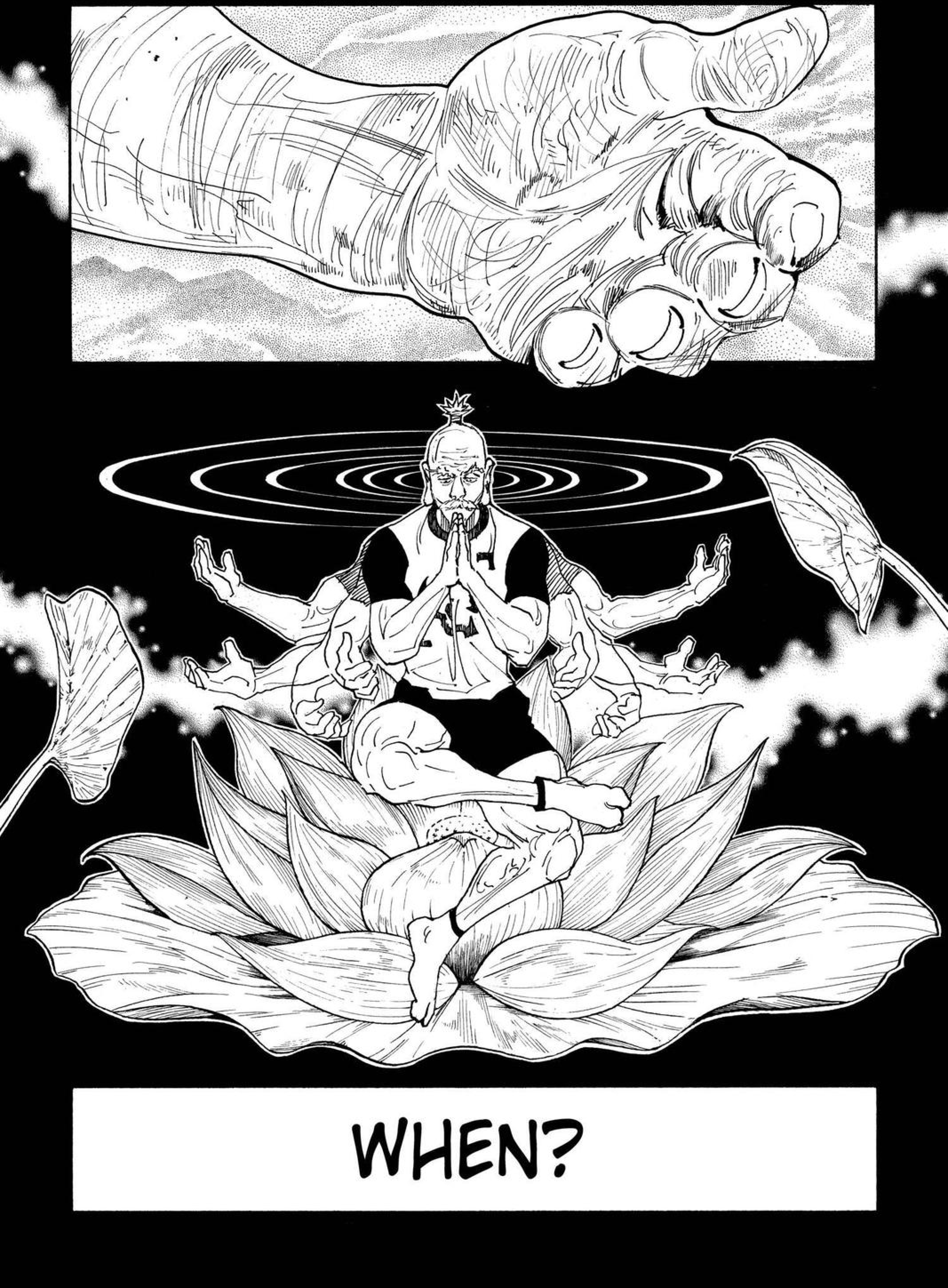
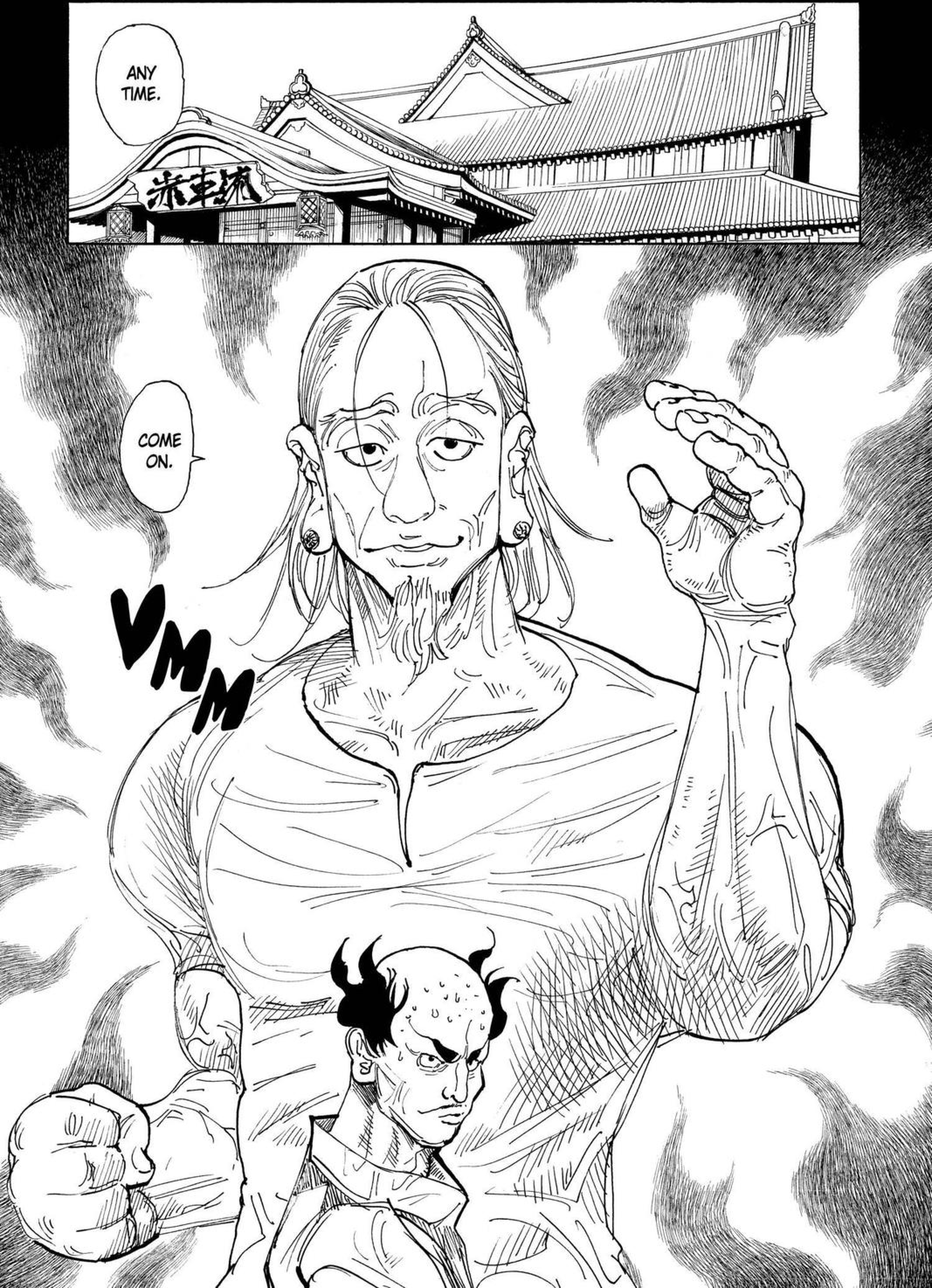
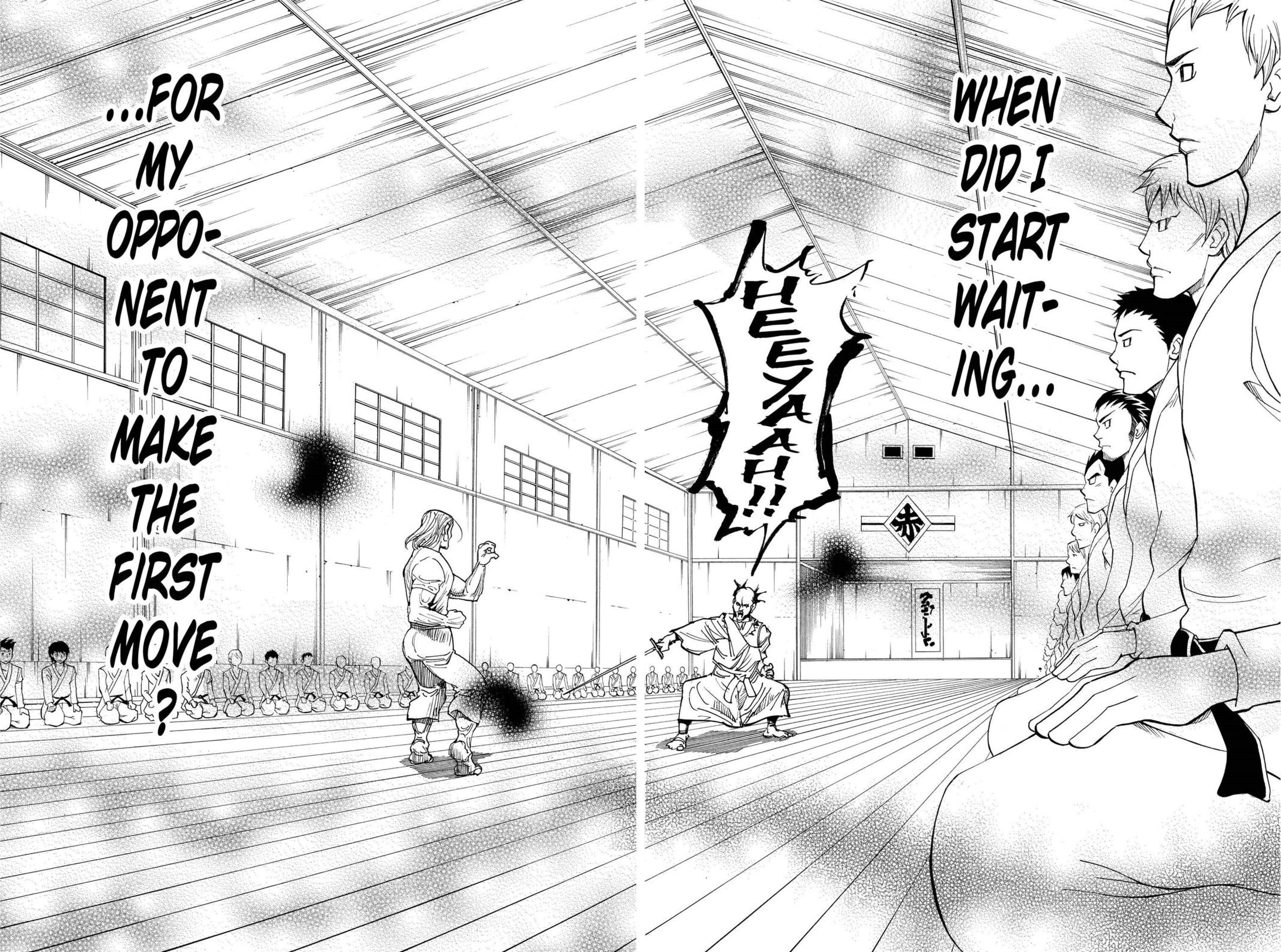

TMM
NETERO LEAPT...
...THE INSTANT THE KING RESPONDED.

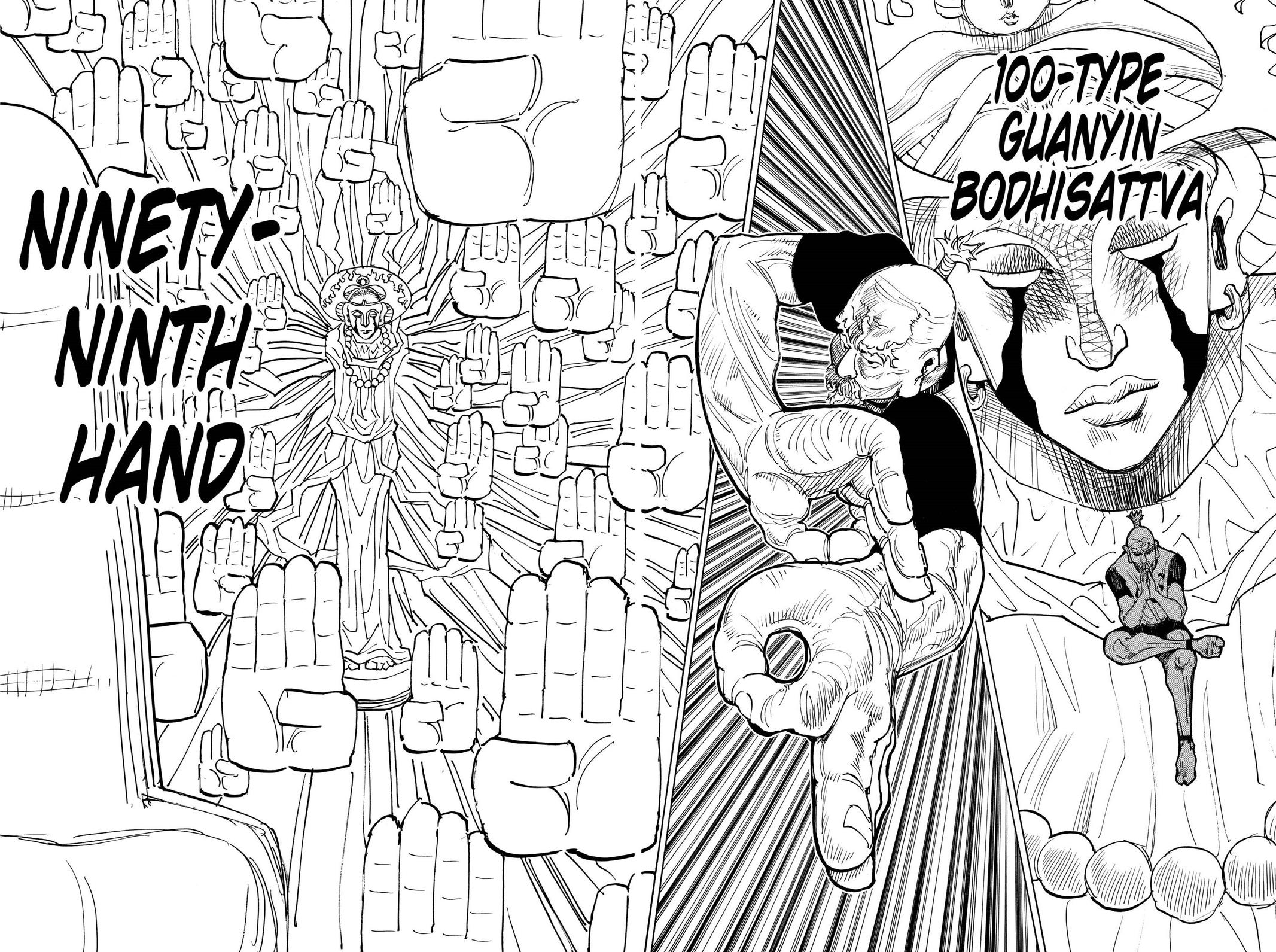
Chapter 291: Soliloquy

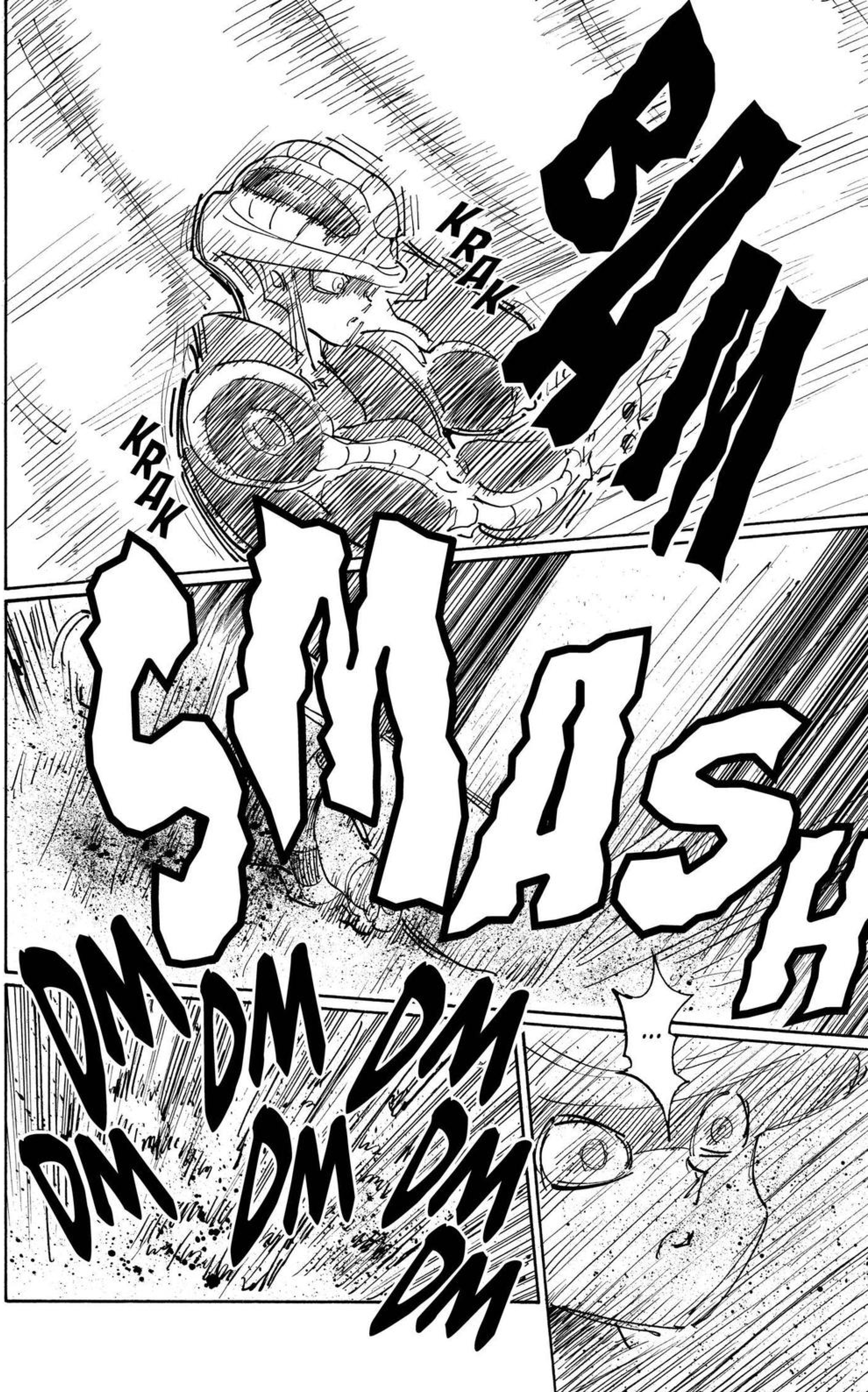

WHEN?

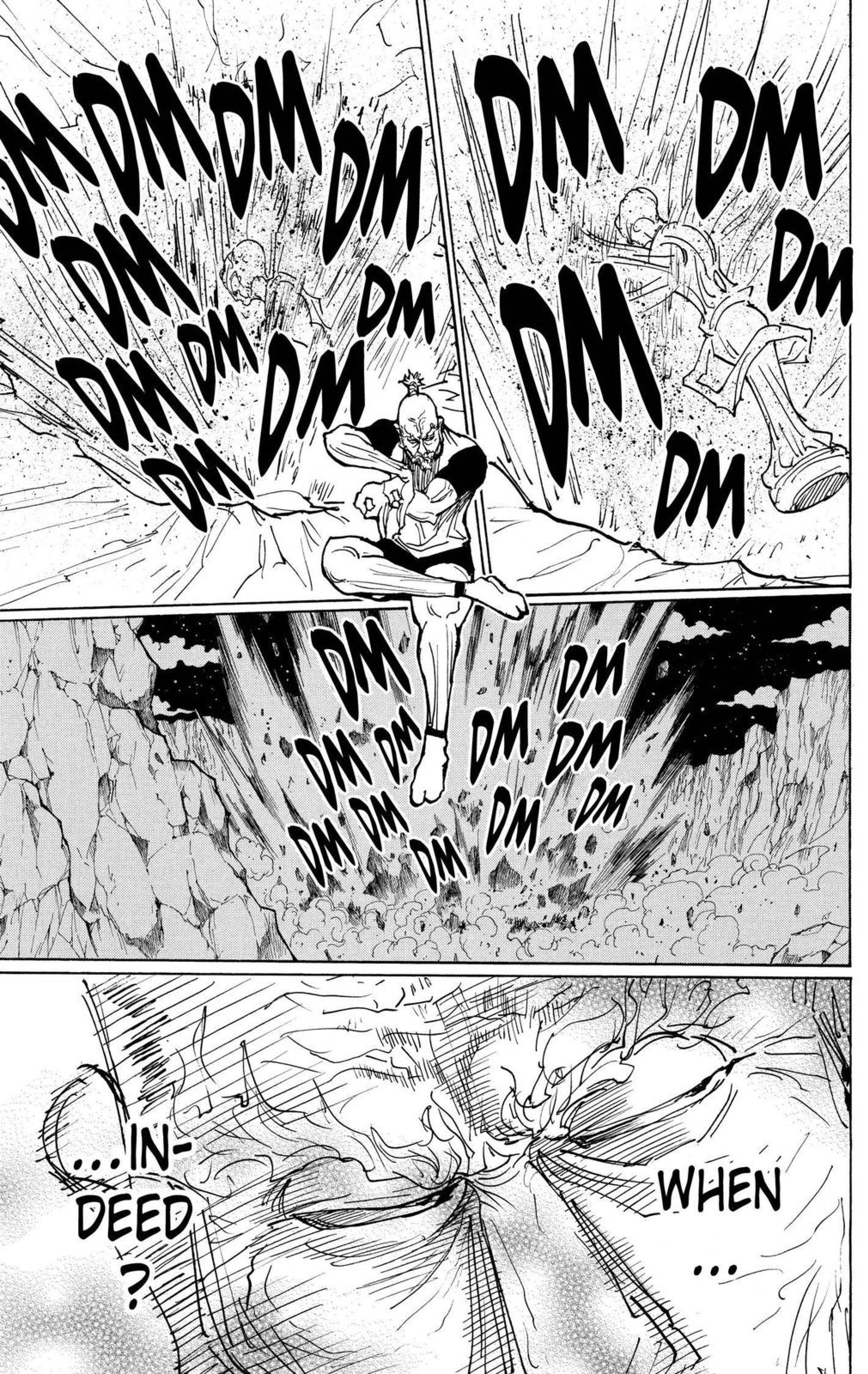
READ THIS WAY

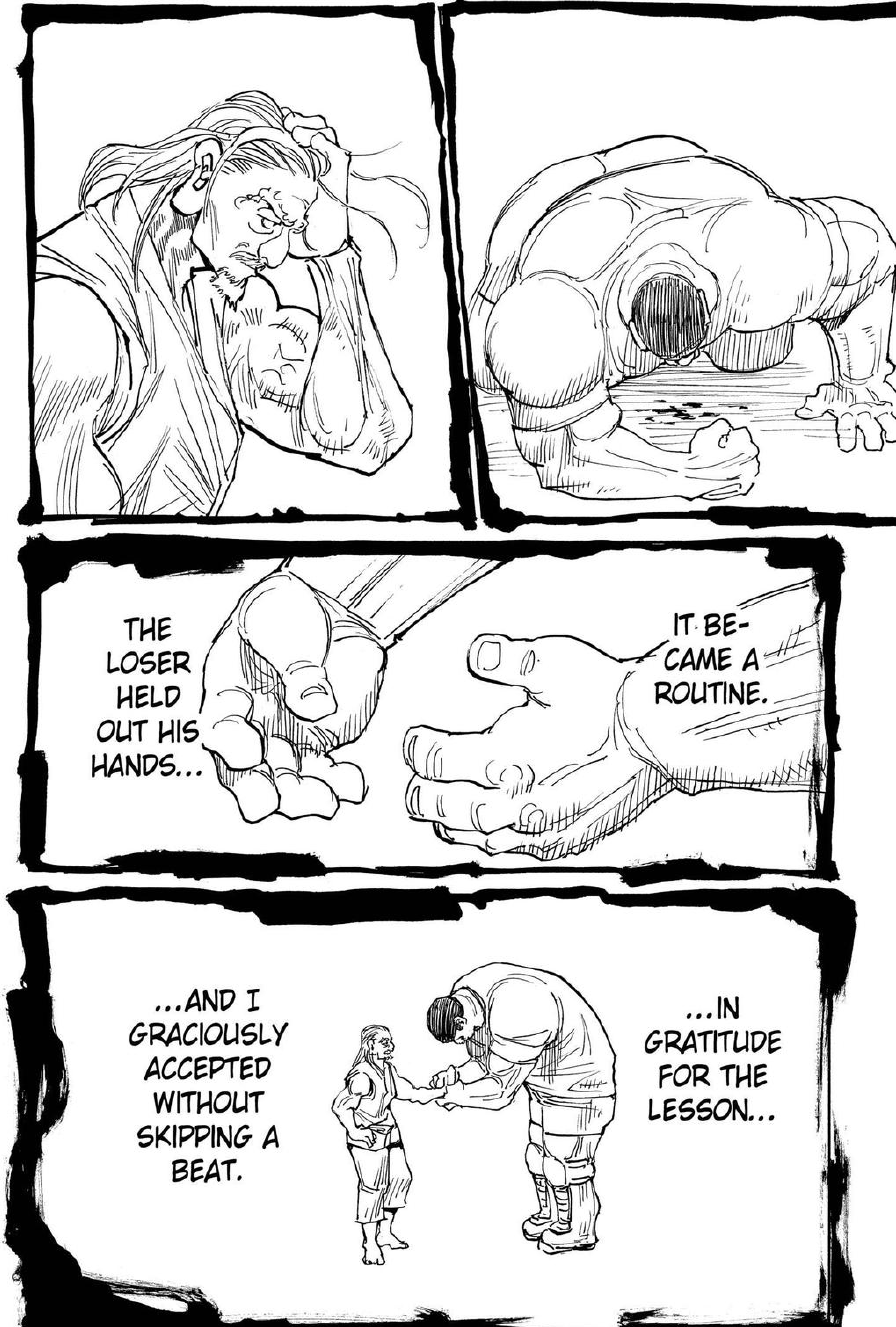

赤車流
ANY TIME.
COME ON.
VMMM

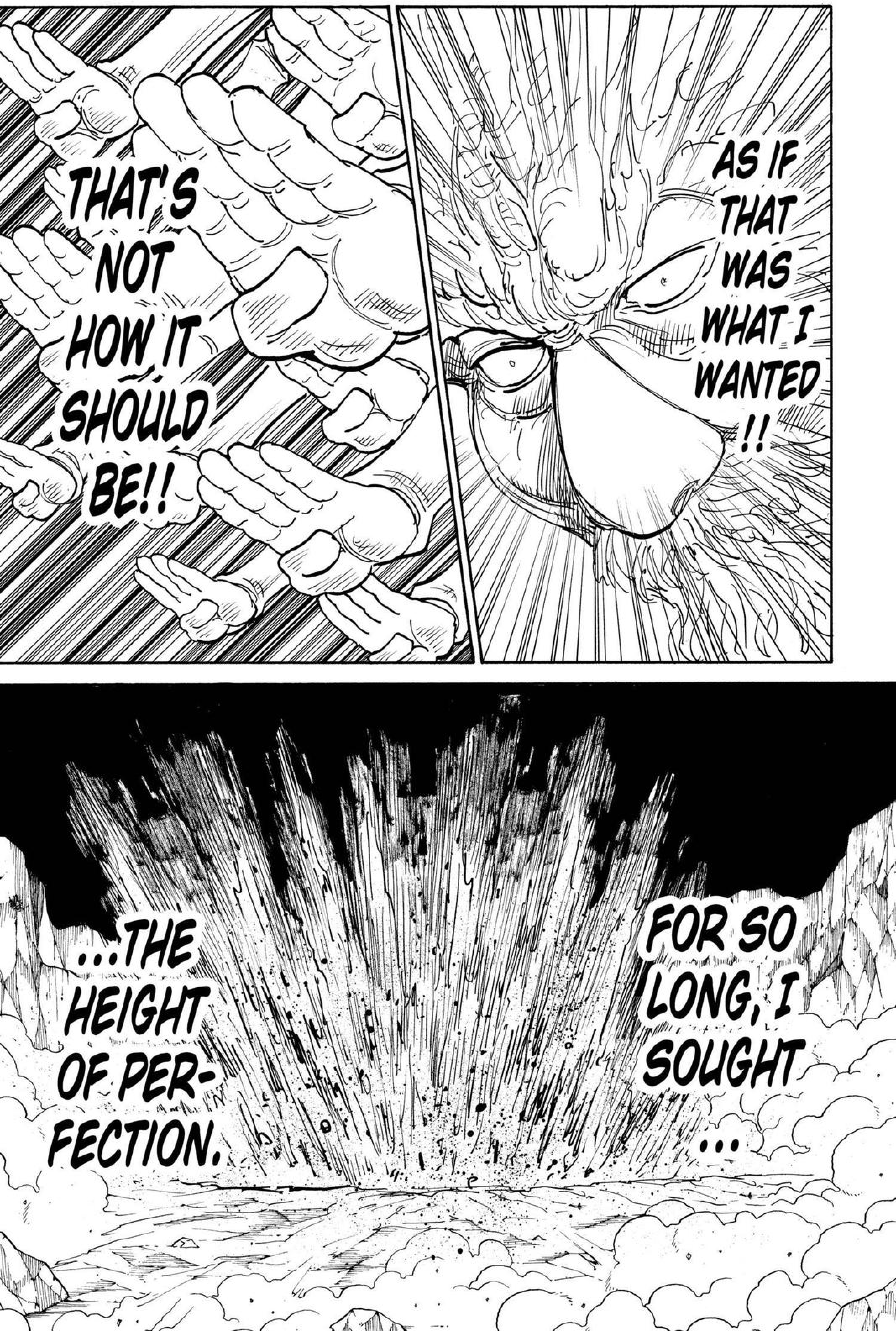

WHEN DID I START WAITING...
HEEYAAH!!!
...FOR MY OPPONENT TO MAKE THE FIRST MOVE?

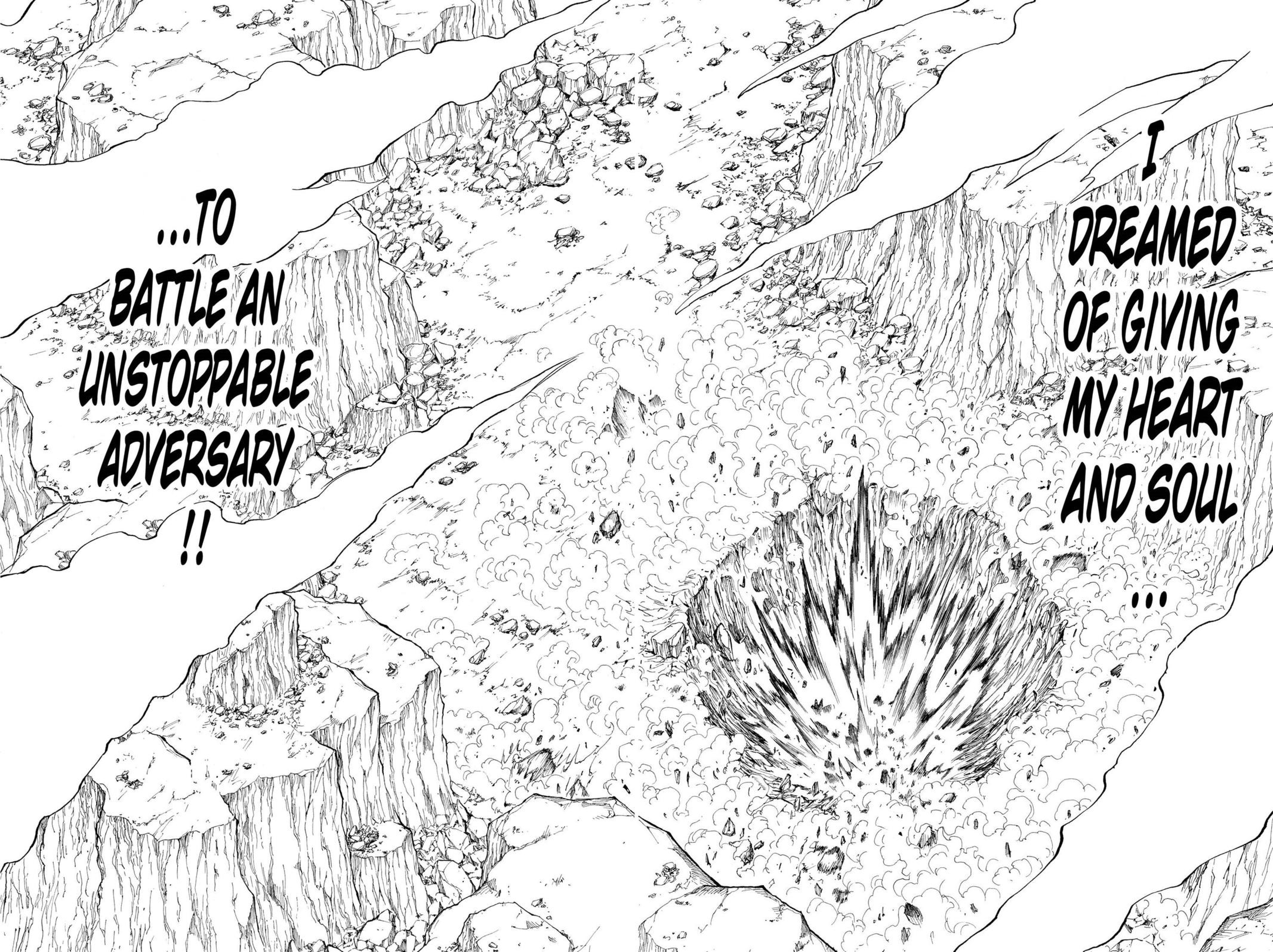

100-TYPE GUANYIN BODHISATTVA
NINETY-NINTH HAND

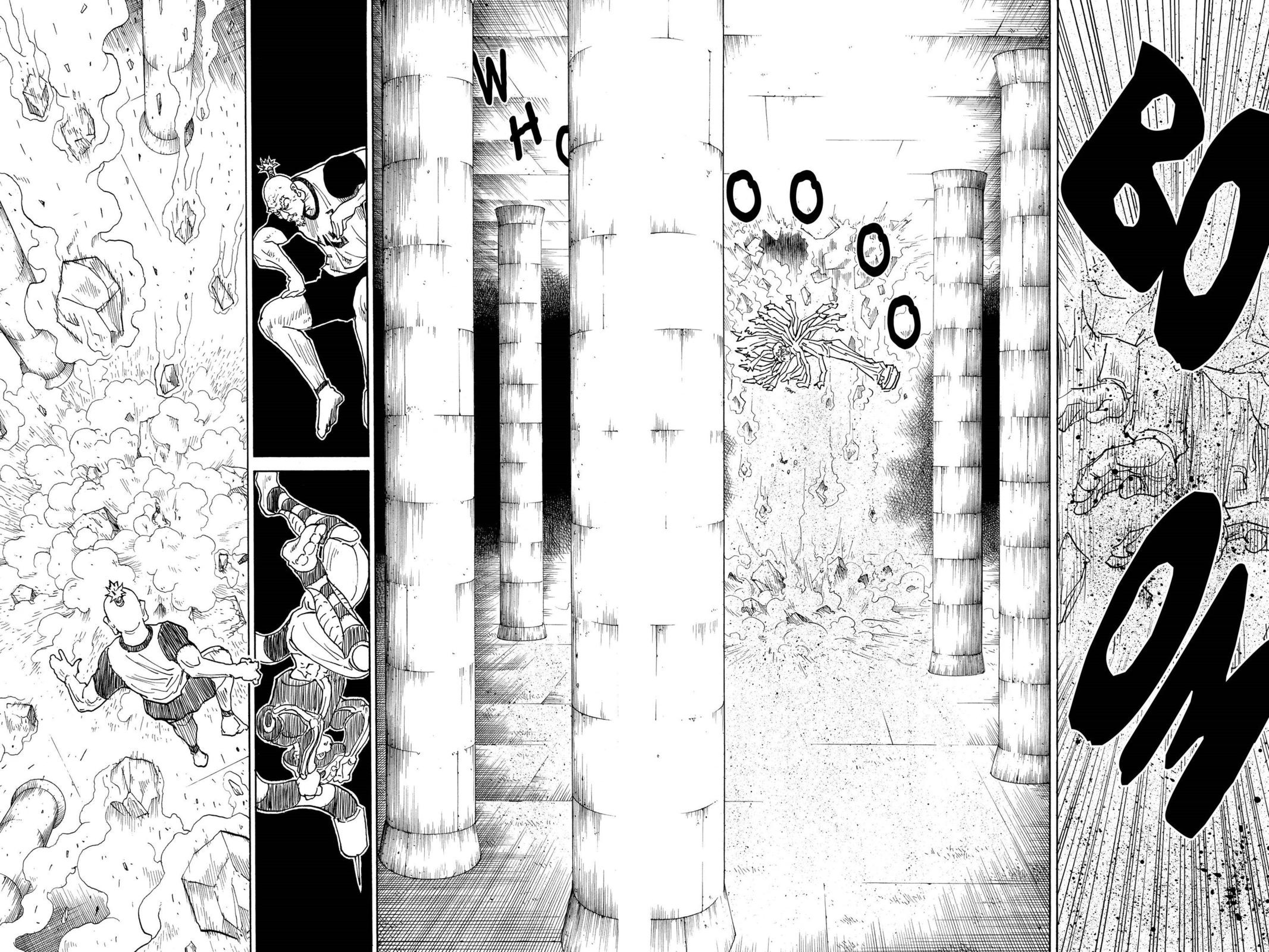

BAM
KRAK KRAK
KRAK KRAK
SMASH
...
DM DM DM
DM DM DM DM DM

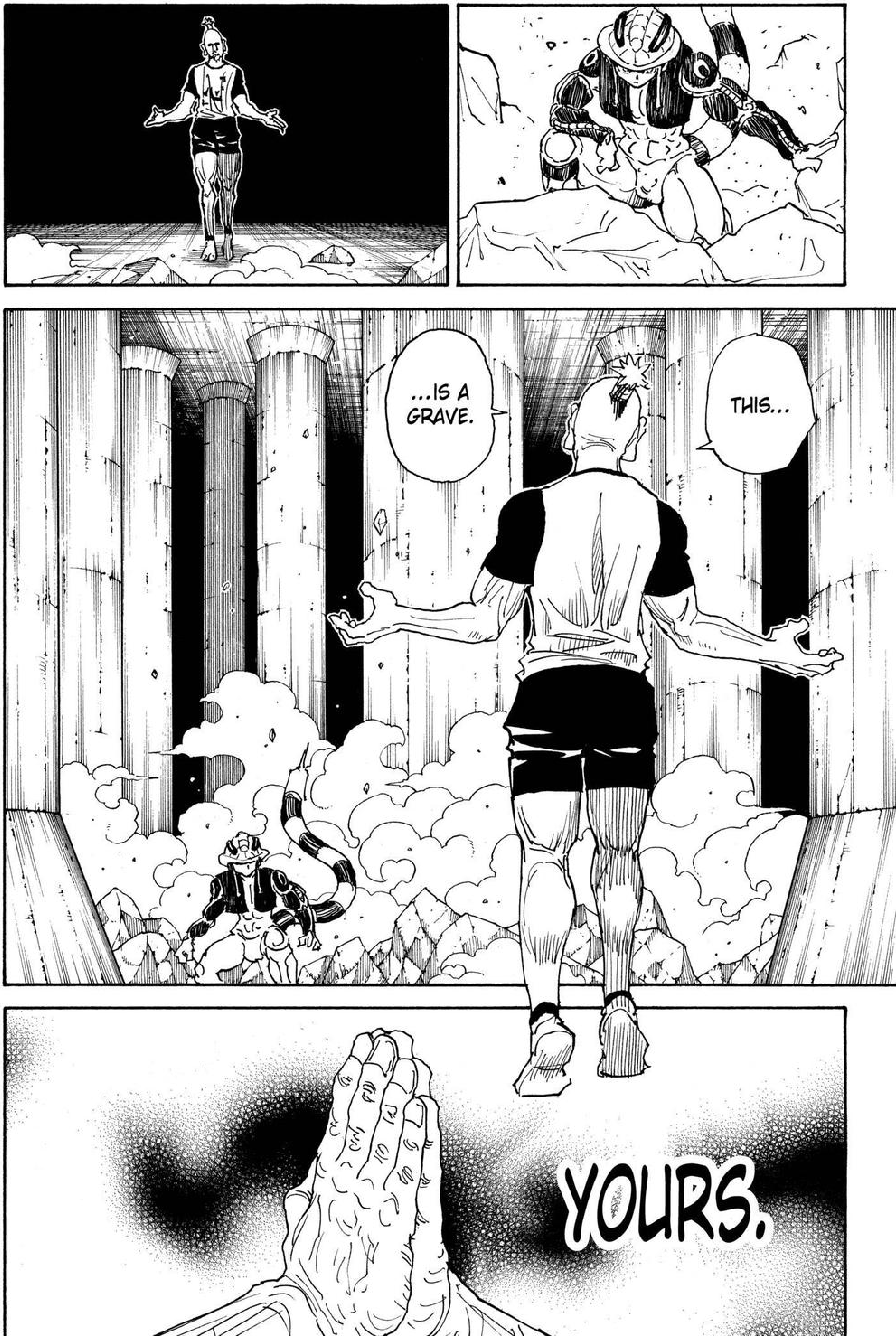

DM DM DM DM DM DM DM
DM DM DM DM DM DM DM DM DM DM DM DM
DM DM DM DM DM DM DM DM DM DM DM DM DM DM
WHEN ...
...IN-DEED?

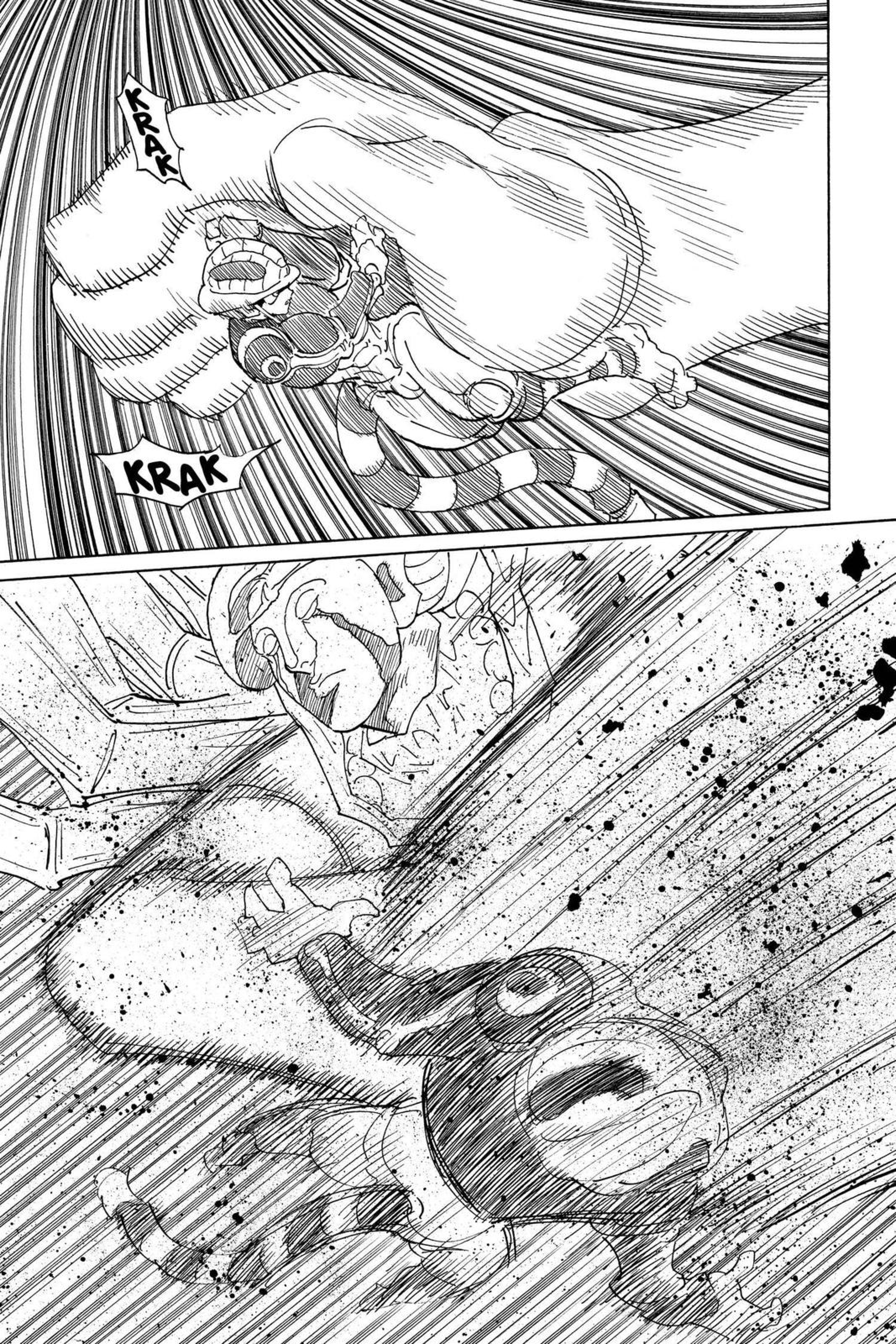

IT BECAME A ROUTINE.
THE LOSER HELD OUT HIS HANDS...
...IN GRATITUDE FOR THE LESSON...
...AND I GRACIOUSLY ACCEPTED WITHOUT SKIPPING A BEAT.

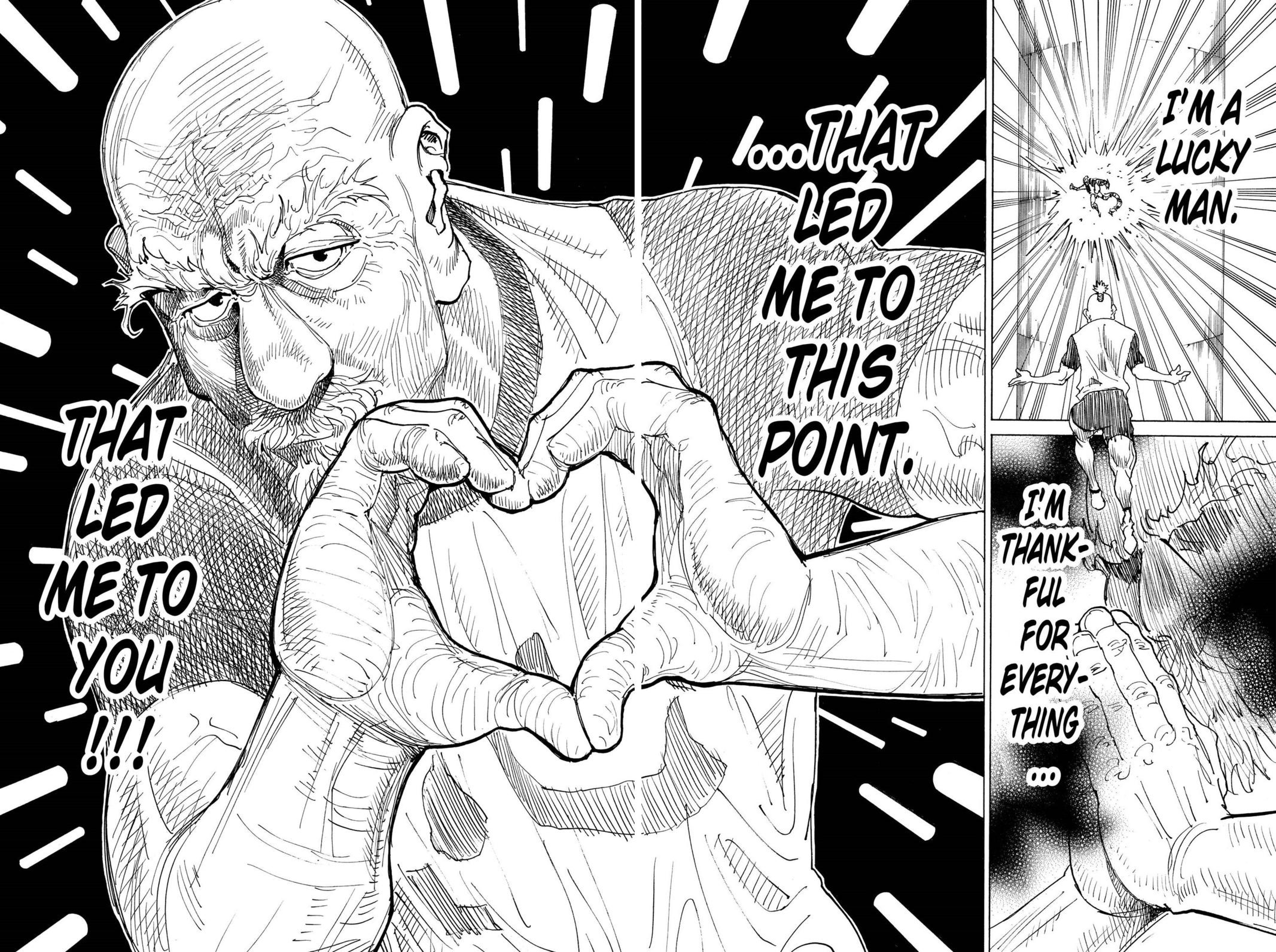

AS IF THAT WAS WHAT I WANTED!!
THAT'S NOT HOW IT SHOULD BE!!
FOR SO LONG, I SOUGHT...
...THE HEIGHT OF PERFECTION.

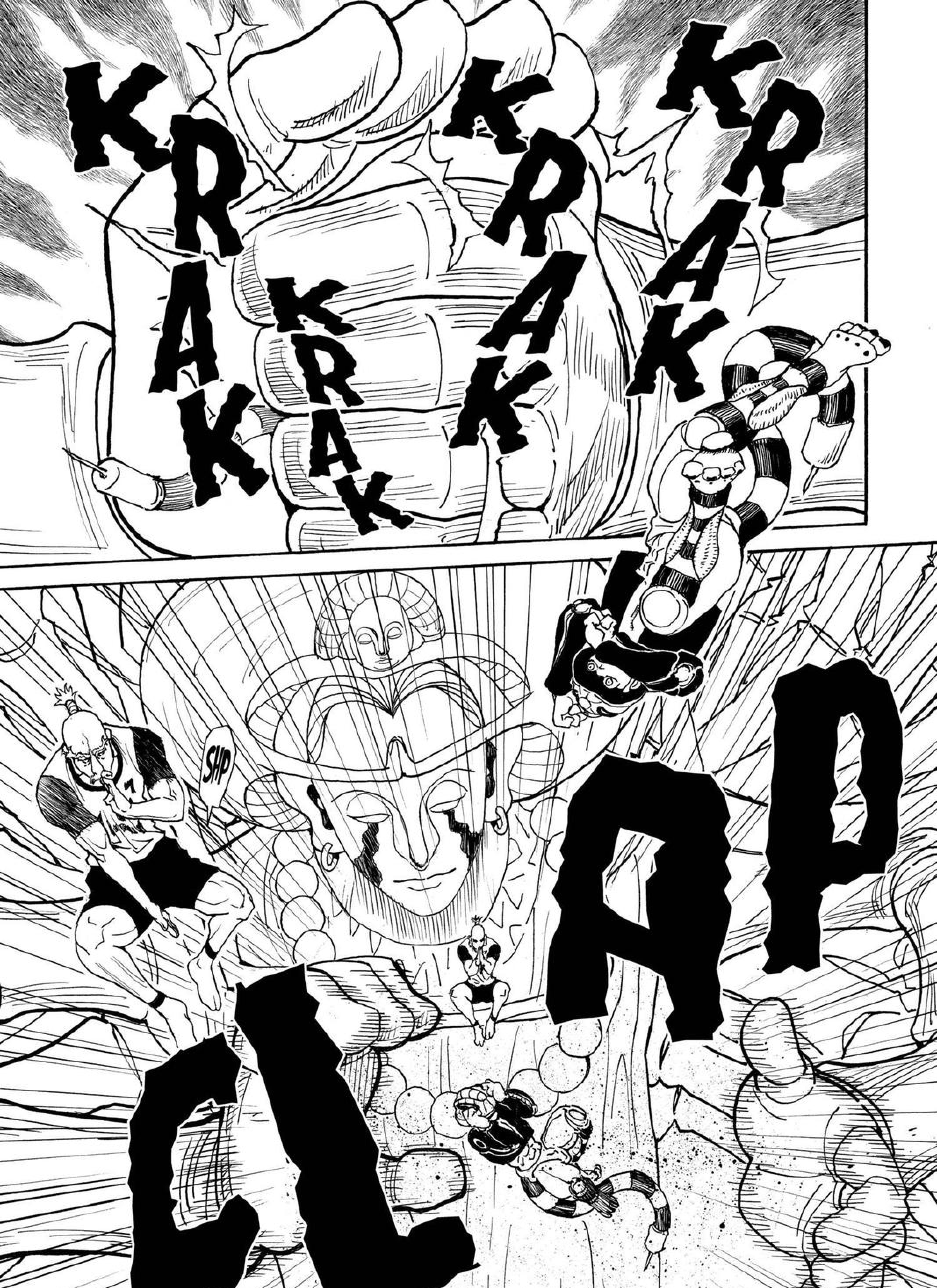

I DREAMED OF GIVING MY HEART AND SOUL ...
...TO BATTLE AN UNSTOPPABLE ADVERSARY !!


BOOM
WHOOOOO

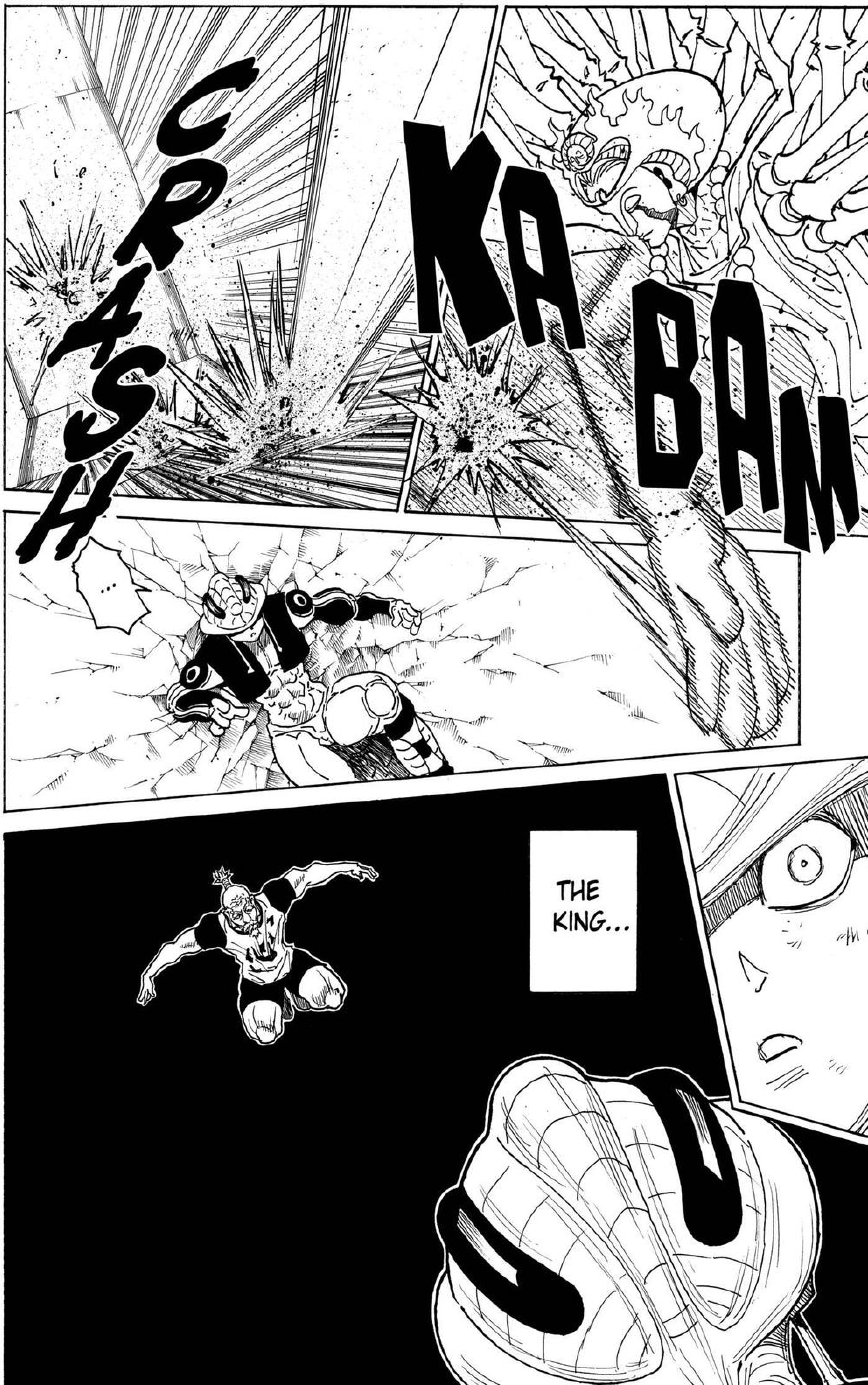

THIS...
...IS A GRAVE.
YOURS.

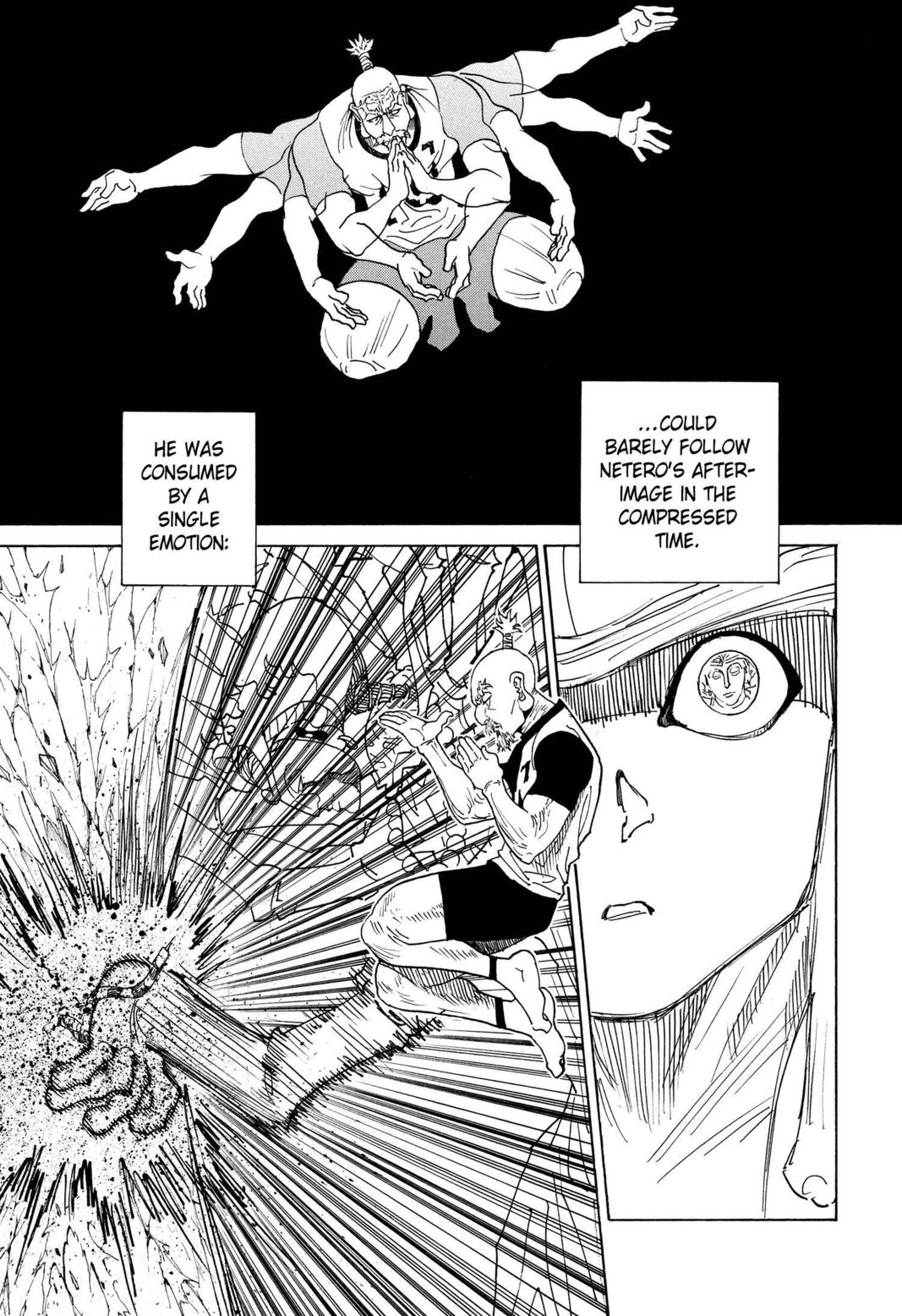

KRAK
KRAK

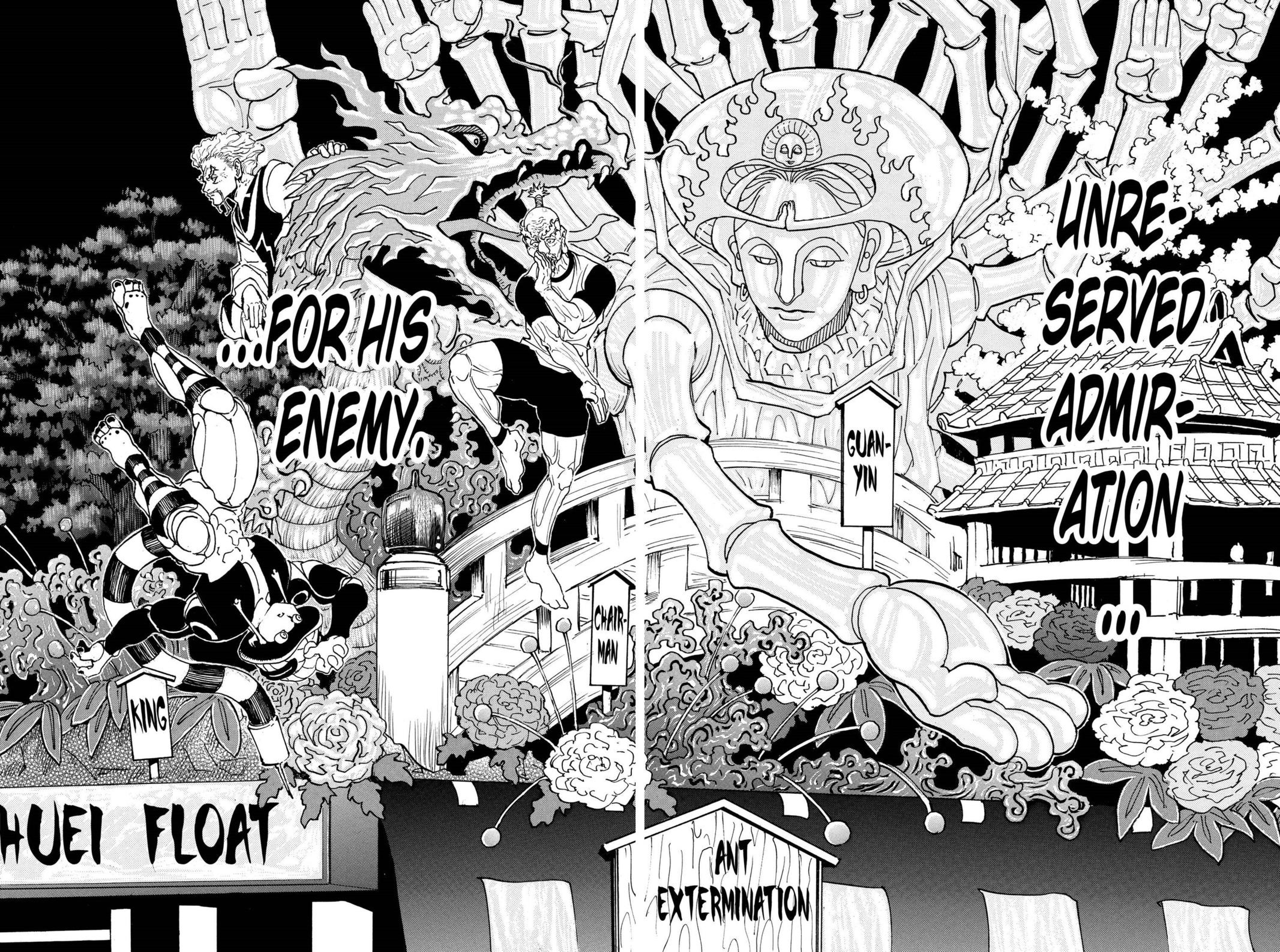

I'M A LUCKY MAN.
I'M THANKFUL FOR EVERYTHING...
...THAT LED ME TO THIS POINT.
THAT LED ME TO YOU!!!

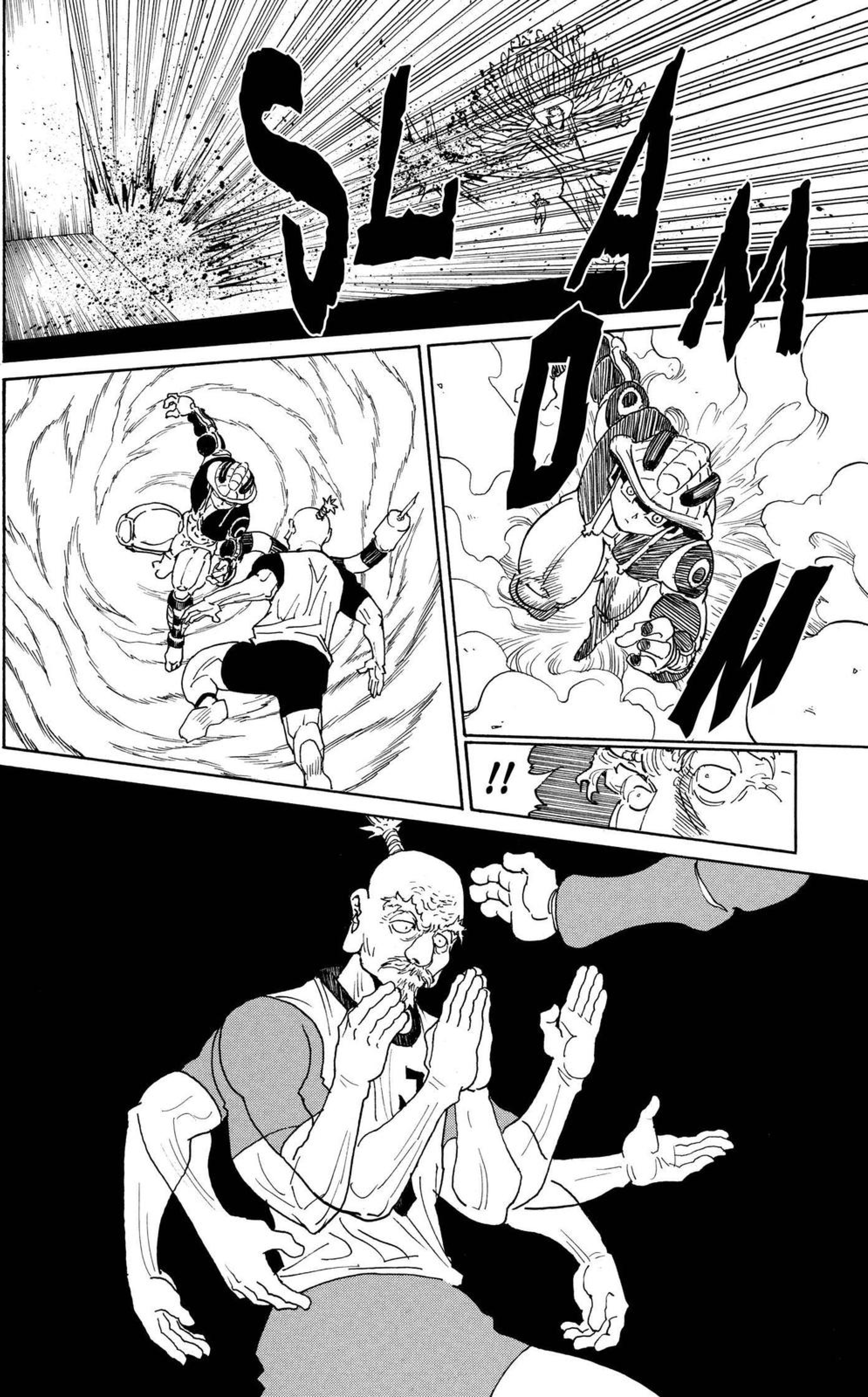

KRAK
KRAK
KRAK
KRAK
SHP
CLAP

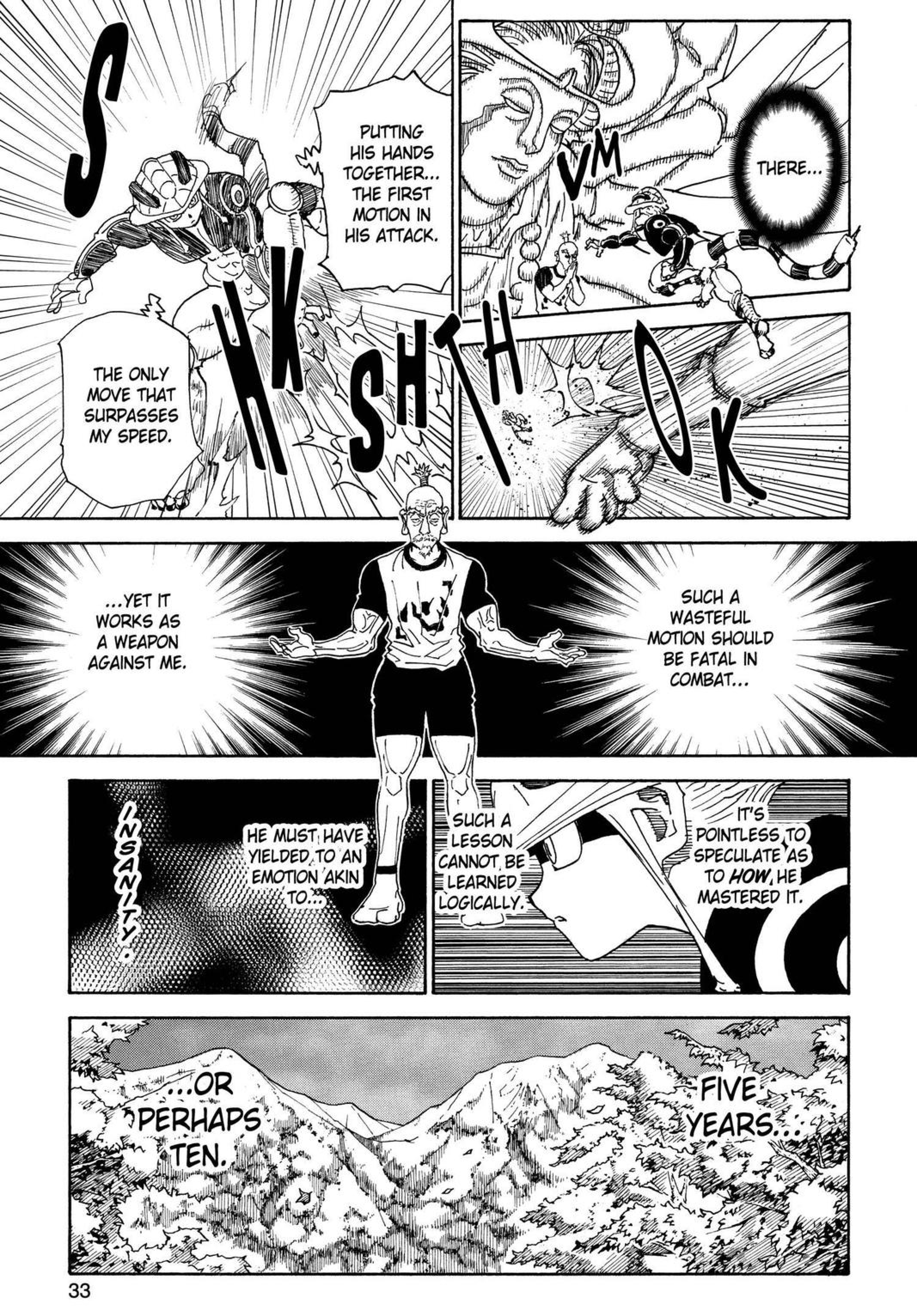
Chapter 292: Hidden Agenda

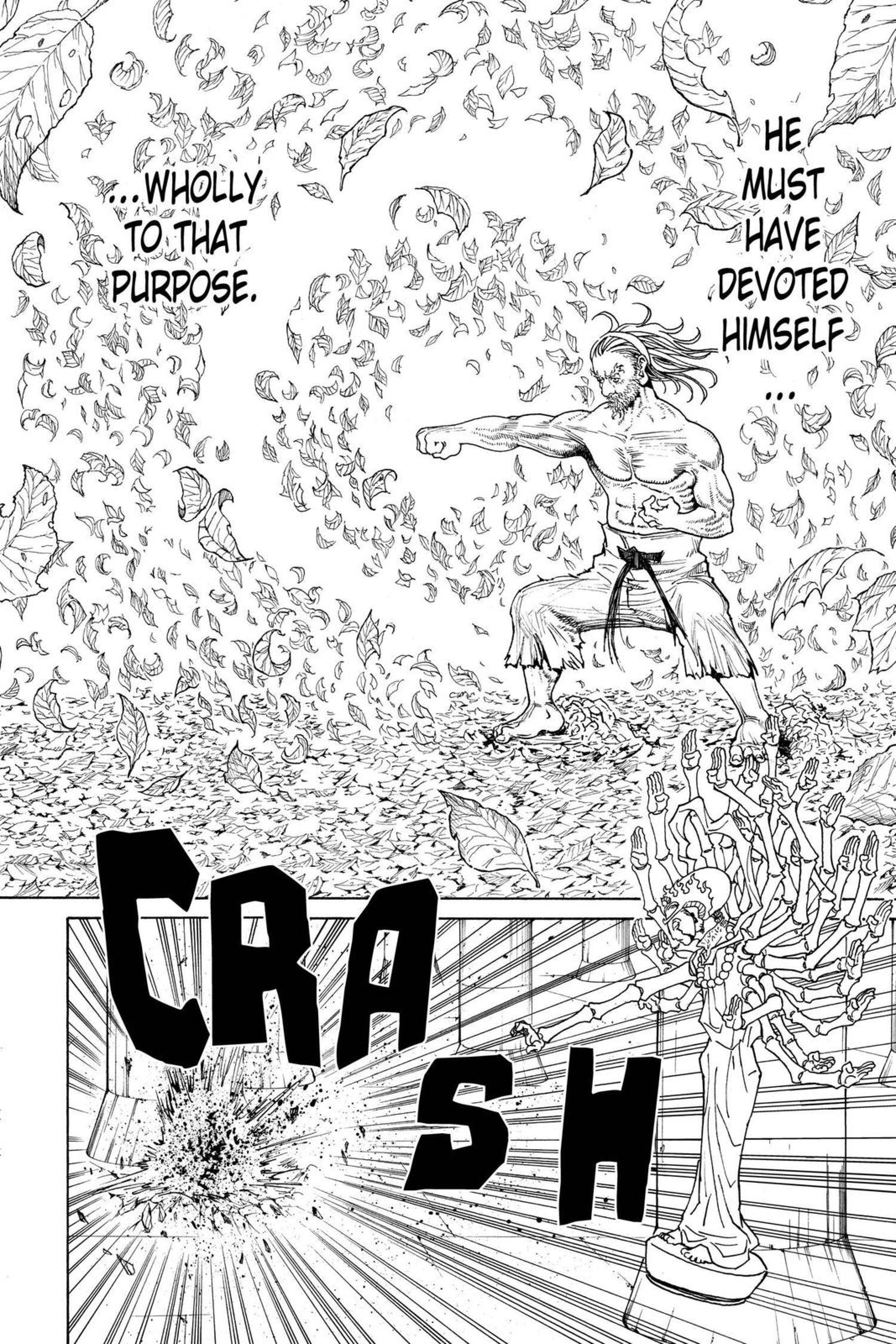

KA BAM
CRASH
...
THE KING...

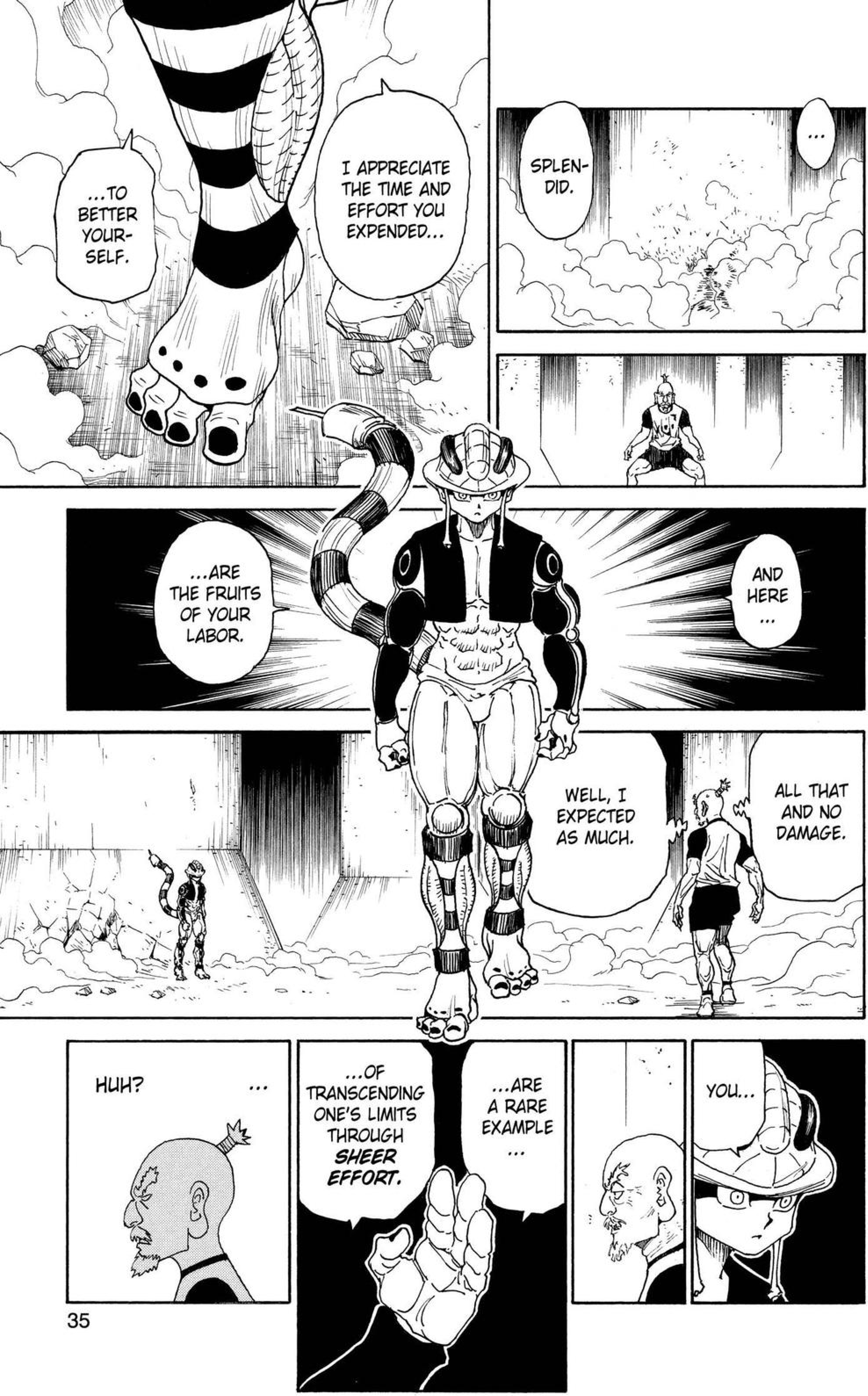

...COULD BARELY FOLLOW NETERO'S AFTER-IMAGE IN THE COMPRESSED TIME.
HE WAS CONSUMED BY A SINGLE EMOTION:

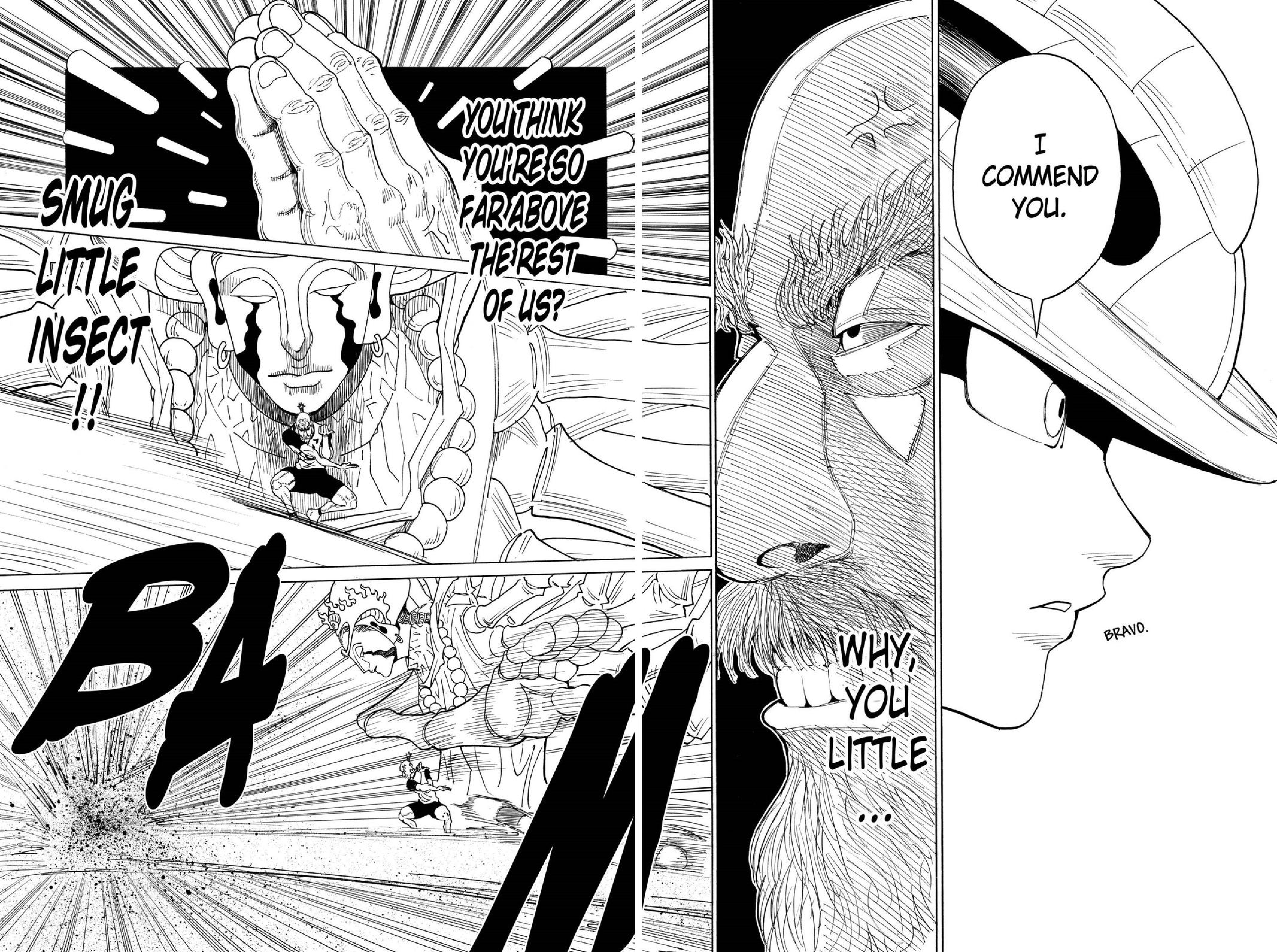

UNRESERVED ADMIRATION...
GUANYIN
ANT EXTERMINATION
CHAIRMAN
...FOR HIS ENEMY.
KING
HUEI FLOAT

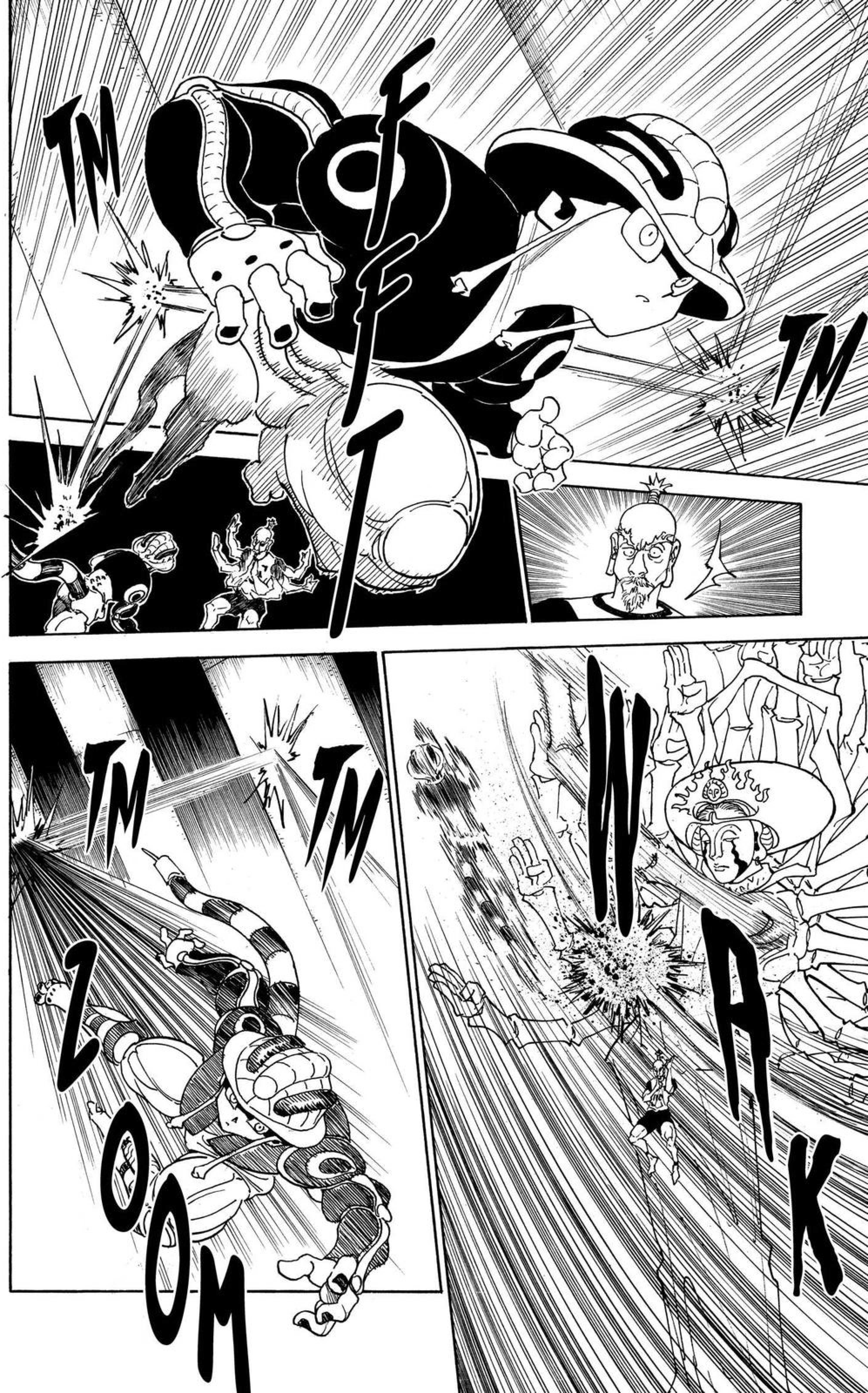

SLAM
D
M
!!

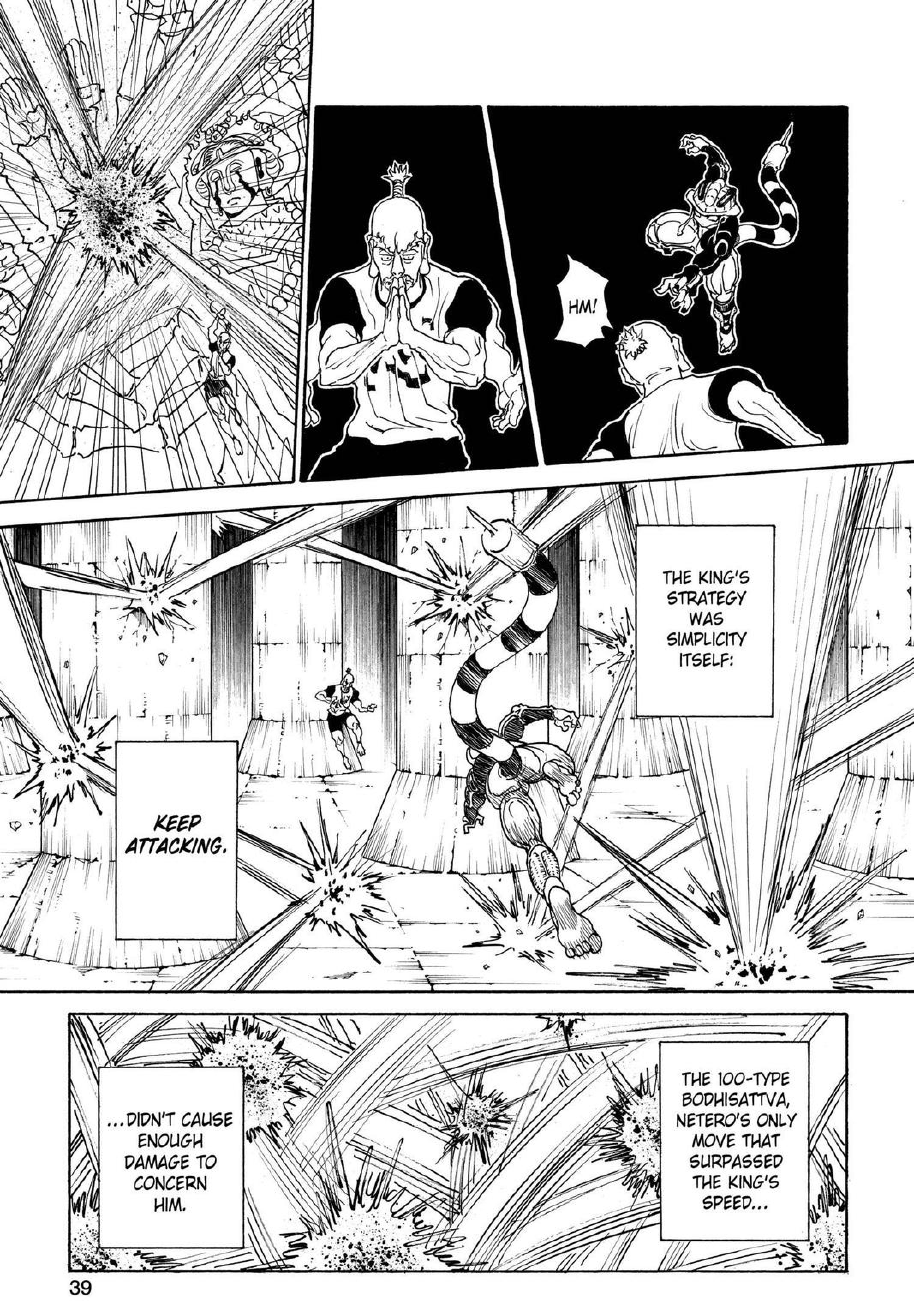

VM
THERE...
SHKSHTHOK
PUTTING HIS HANDS TOGETHER... THE FIRST MOTION IN HIS ATTACK.
THE ONLY MOVE THAT SURPASSES MY SPEED.
SUCH A WASTEFUL MOTION SHOULD BE FATAL IN COMBAT...
...YET IT WORKS AS A WEAPON AGAINST ME.
IT'S POINTLESS TO SPECULATE AS TO *HOW* HE MASTERED IT.
SUCH A LESSON CANNOT BE LEARNED LOGICALLY.
HE MUST HAVE YIELDED TO AN EMOTION AKIN TO...
INSANITY.
FIVE YEARS...
...OR PERHAPS TEN.

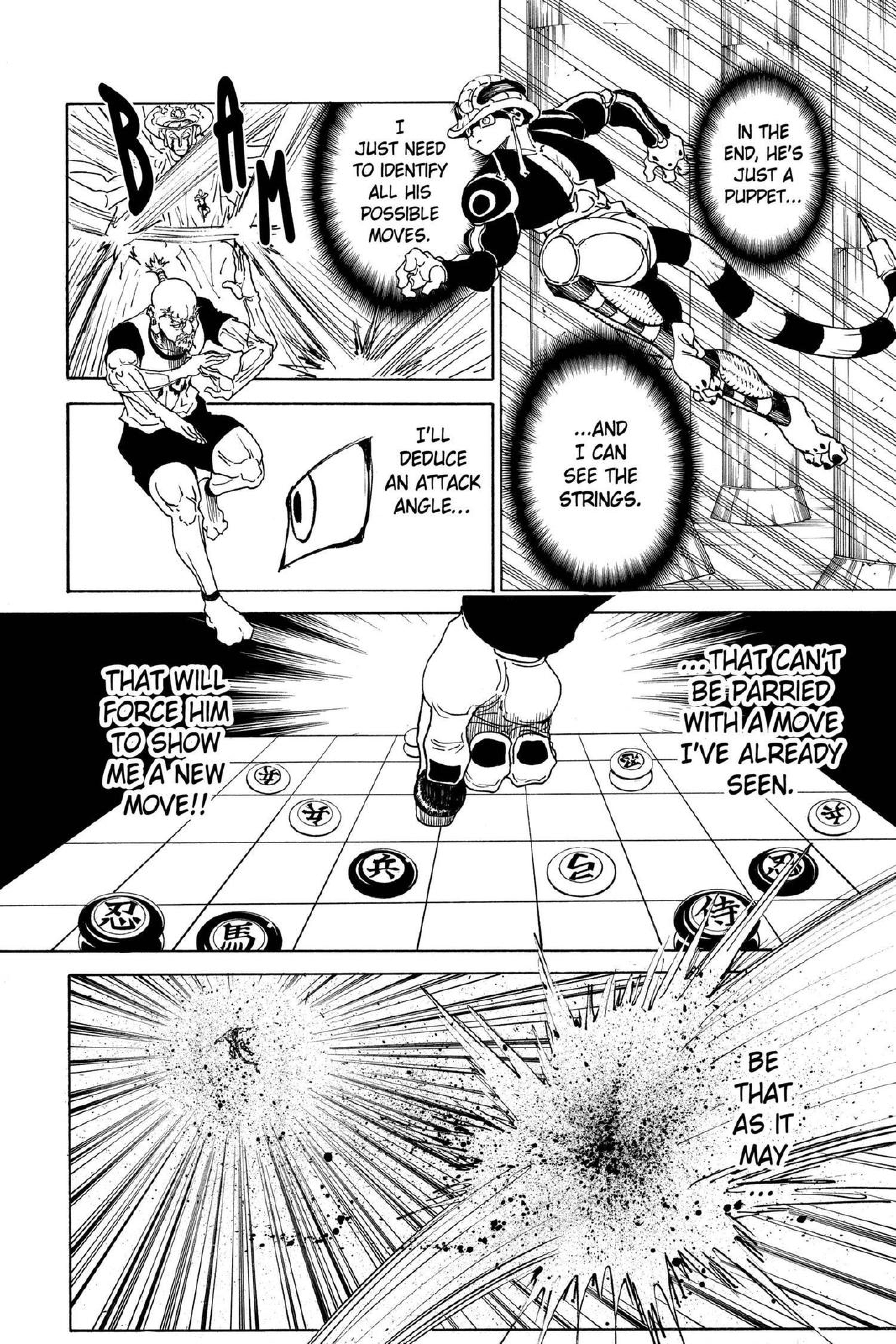

HE MUST HAVE DEVOTED HIMSELF ...
...WHOLLY TO THAT PURPOSE.
CRASH

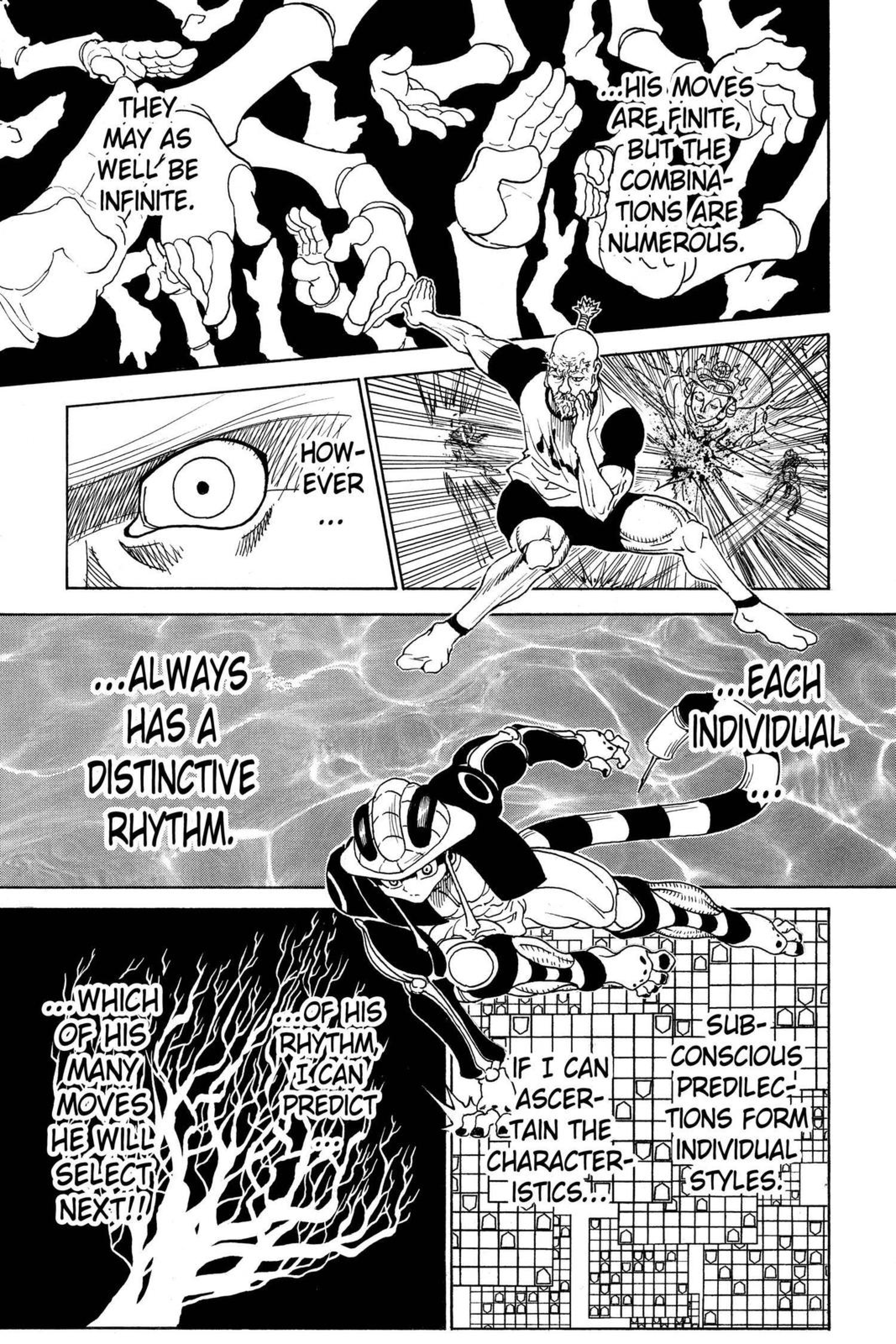

...
SPLENDID.
I APPRECIATE THE TIME AND EFFORT YOU EXPENDED...
...TO BETTER YOURSELF.
AND HERE...
...ARE THE FRUITS OF YOUR LABOR.
ALL THAT AND NO DAMAGE.
WELL, I EXPECTED AS MUCH.
YOU...
...ARE A RARE EXAMPLE...
...OF TRANSCENDING ONE'S LIMITS THROUGH *SHEER EFFORT.*
...
HUH?

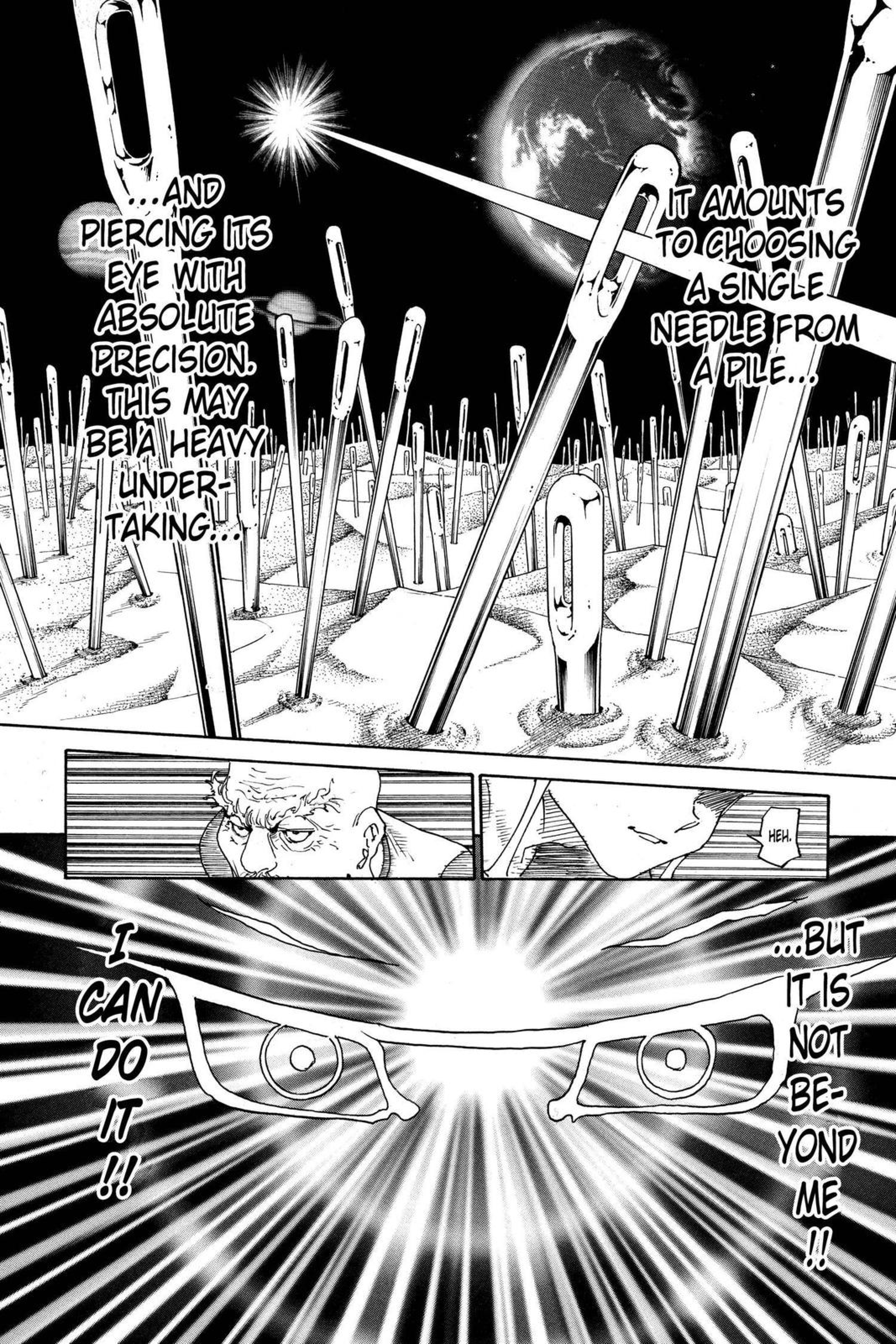

I COMMEND YOU.
BRAVO.
WHY, YOU LITTLE …
YOU THINK YOU'RE SO FAR ABOVE THE REST OF US?
SMUG LITTLE INSECT !!
BAM

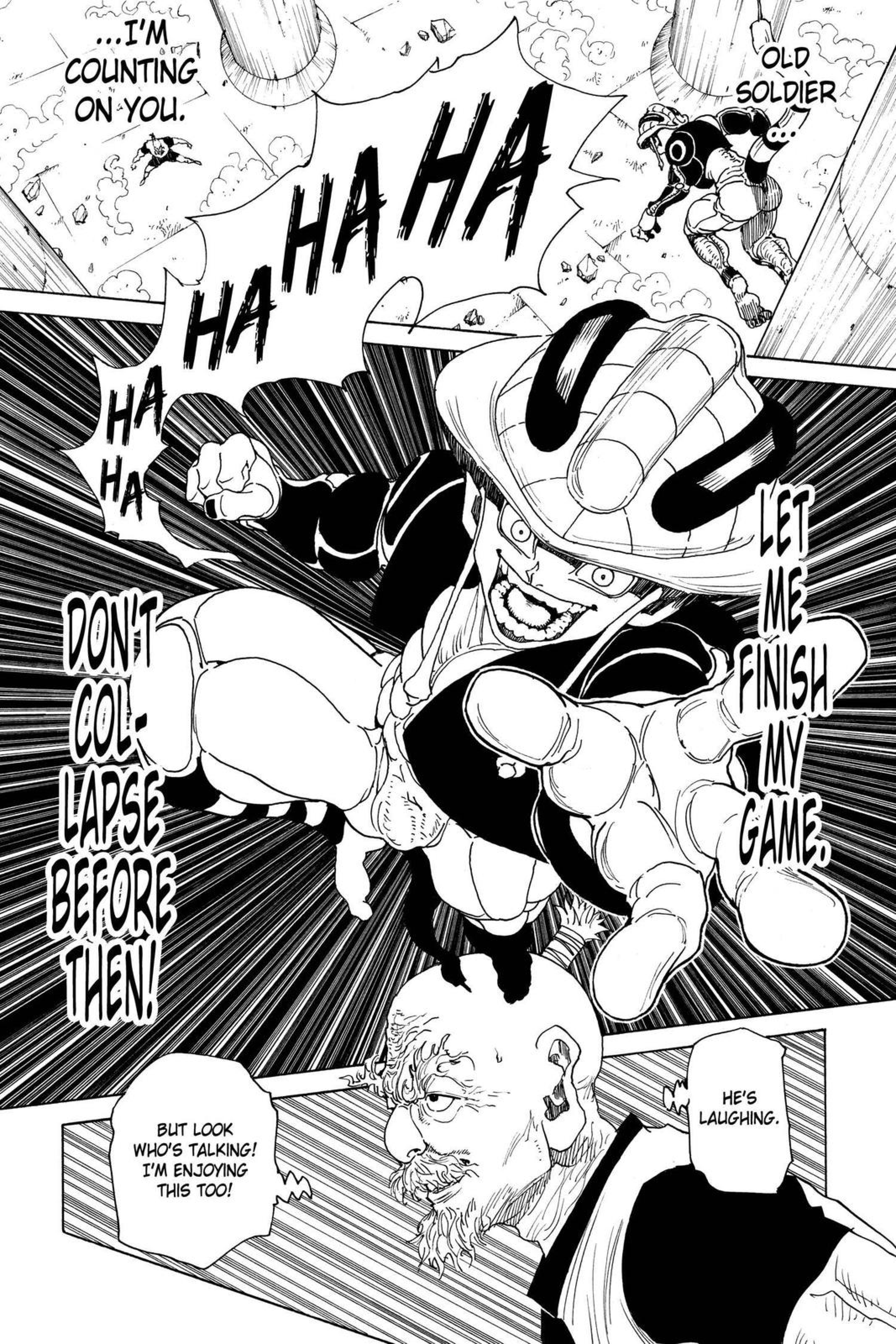

TM
FFT
TM
WAK
TM
TM
ZOOM

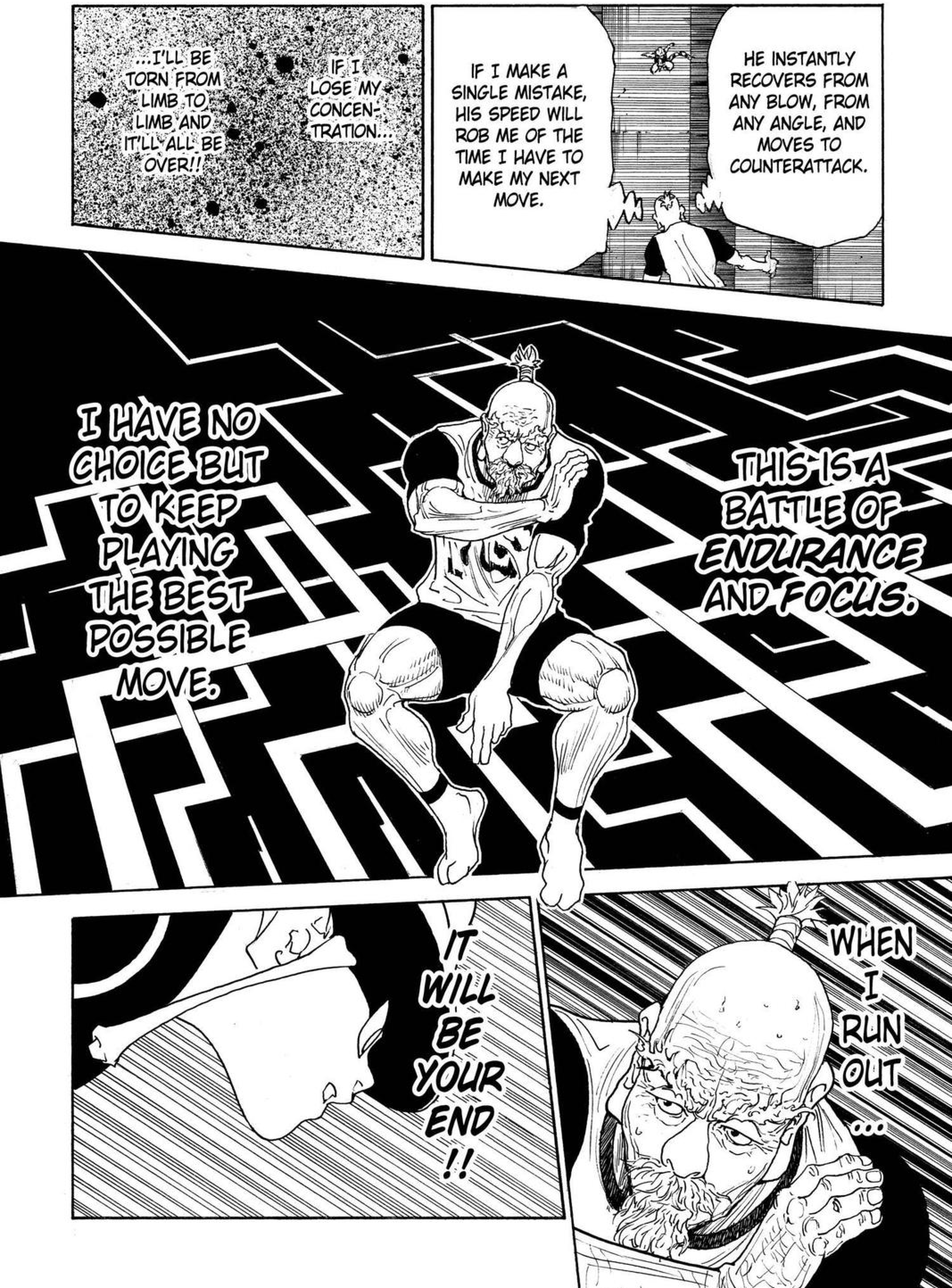

HM!
THE KING'S STRATEGY WAS SIMPLICITY ITSELF:
KEEP ATTACKING.
THE 100-TYPE BODHISATTVA, NETERO'S ONLY MOVE THAT SURPASSED THE KING'S SPEED...
...DIDN'T CAUSE ENOUGH DAMAGE TO CONCERN HIM.

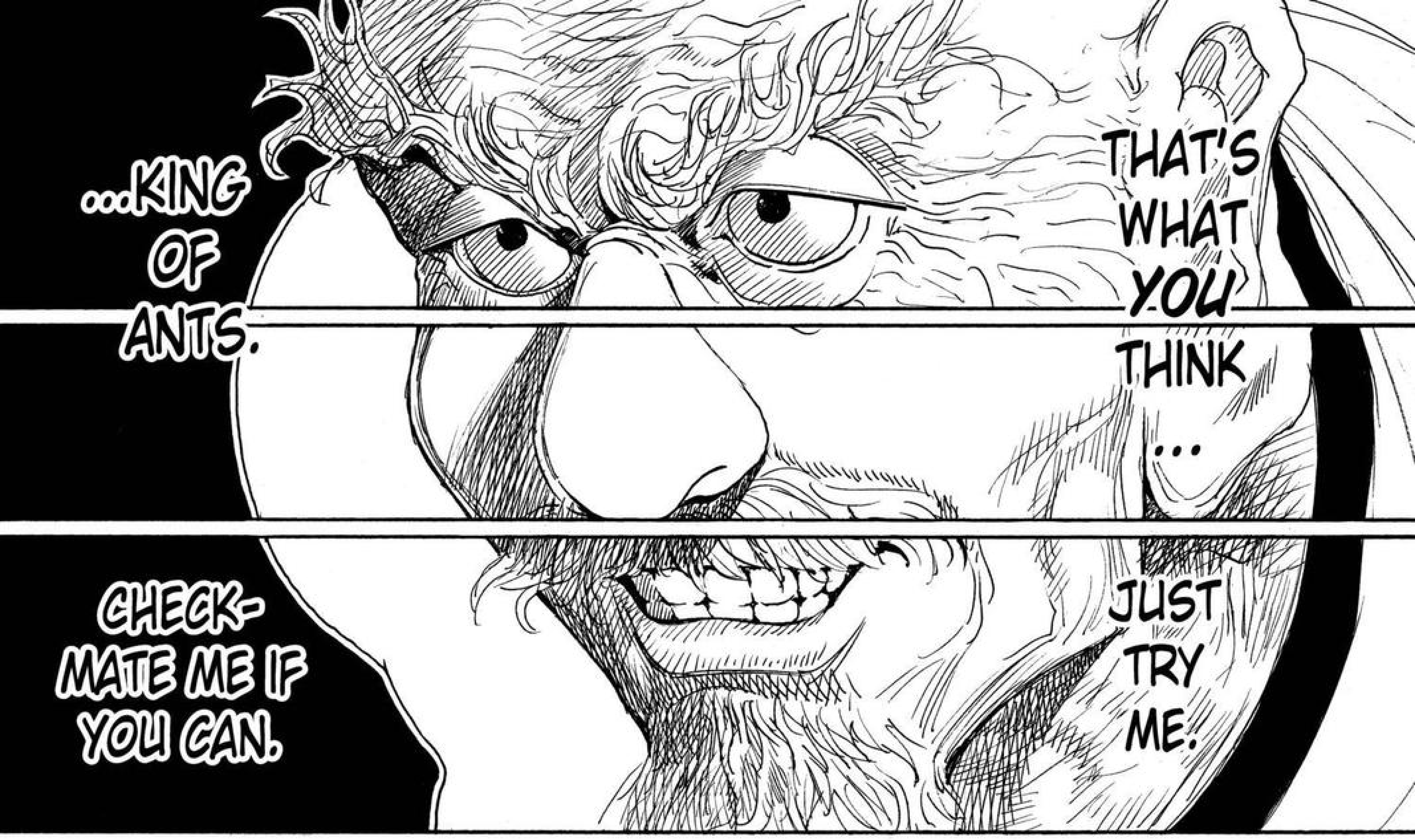

IN THE END, HE'S JUST A PUPPET...
...AND I CAN SEE THE STRINGS.
BAM
I JUST NEED TO IDENTIFY ALL HIS POSSIBLE MOVES.
I'LL DEDUCE AN ATTACK ANGLE...
...THAT CAN'T BE PARRIED WITH A MOVE I'VE ALREADY SEEN.
THAT WILL FORCE HIM TO SHOW ME A NEW MOVE!!
忍
兵
侍
馬
忍
BE THAT AS IT MAY...

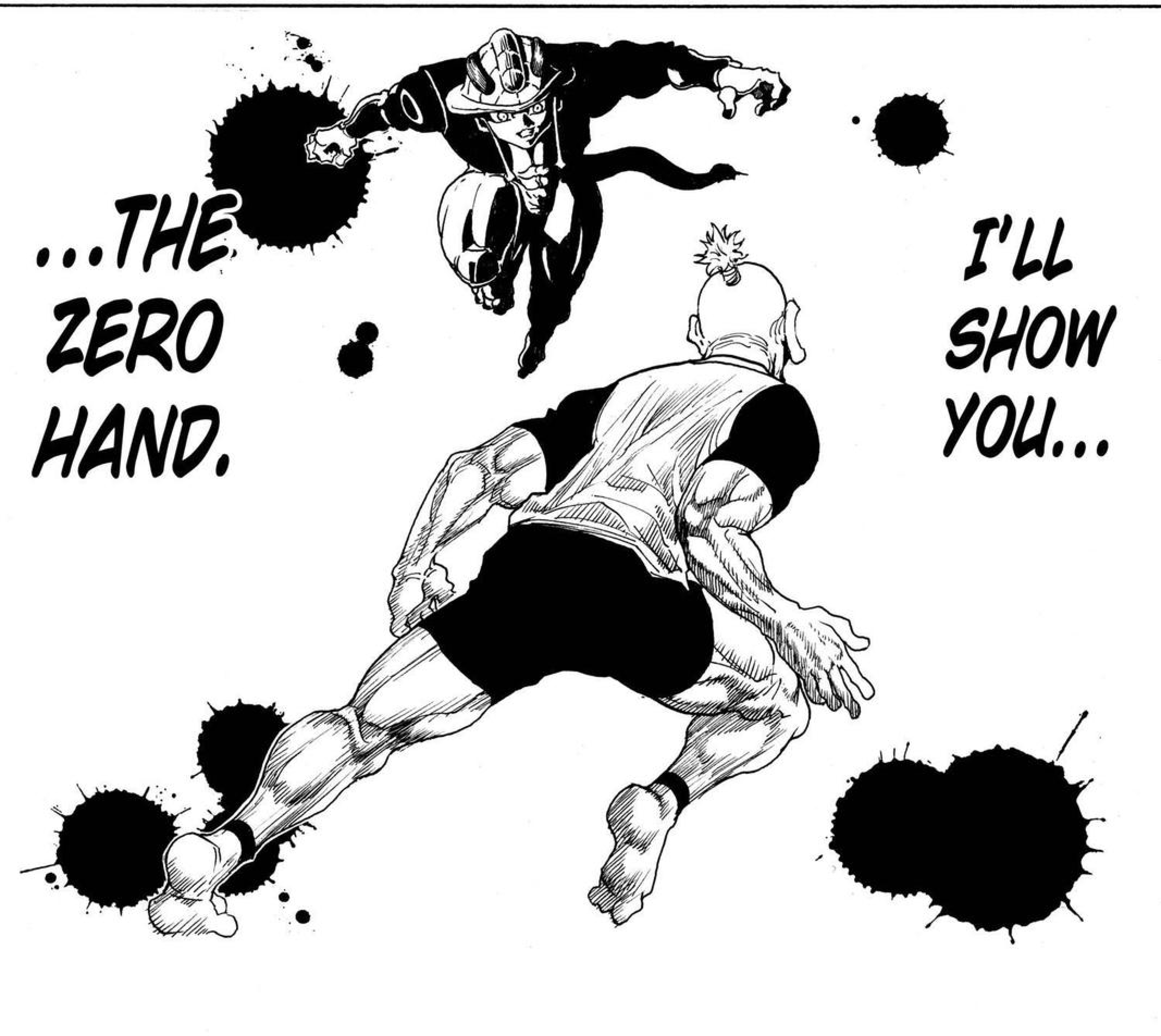

...HIS MOVES ARE FINITE, BUT THE COMBINATIONS ARE NUMEROUS.
THEY MAY AS WELL BE INFINITE.
HOWEVER...
...EACH INDIVIDUAL...
...ALWAYS HAS A DISTINCTIVE RHYTHM.
SUBCONSCIOUS PREDILECTIONS FORM INDIVIDUAL STYLES.
IF I CAN ASCERTAIN THE CHARACTERISTICS...
...OF HIS RHYTHM, I CAN PREDICT...
...WHICH OF HIS MANY MOVES HE WILL SELECT NEXT!!

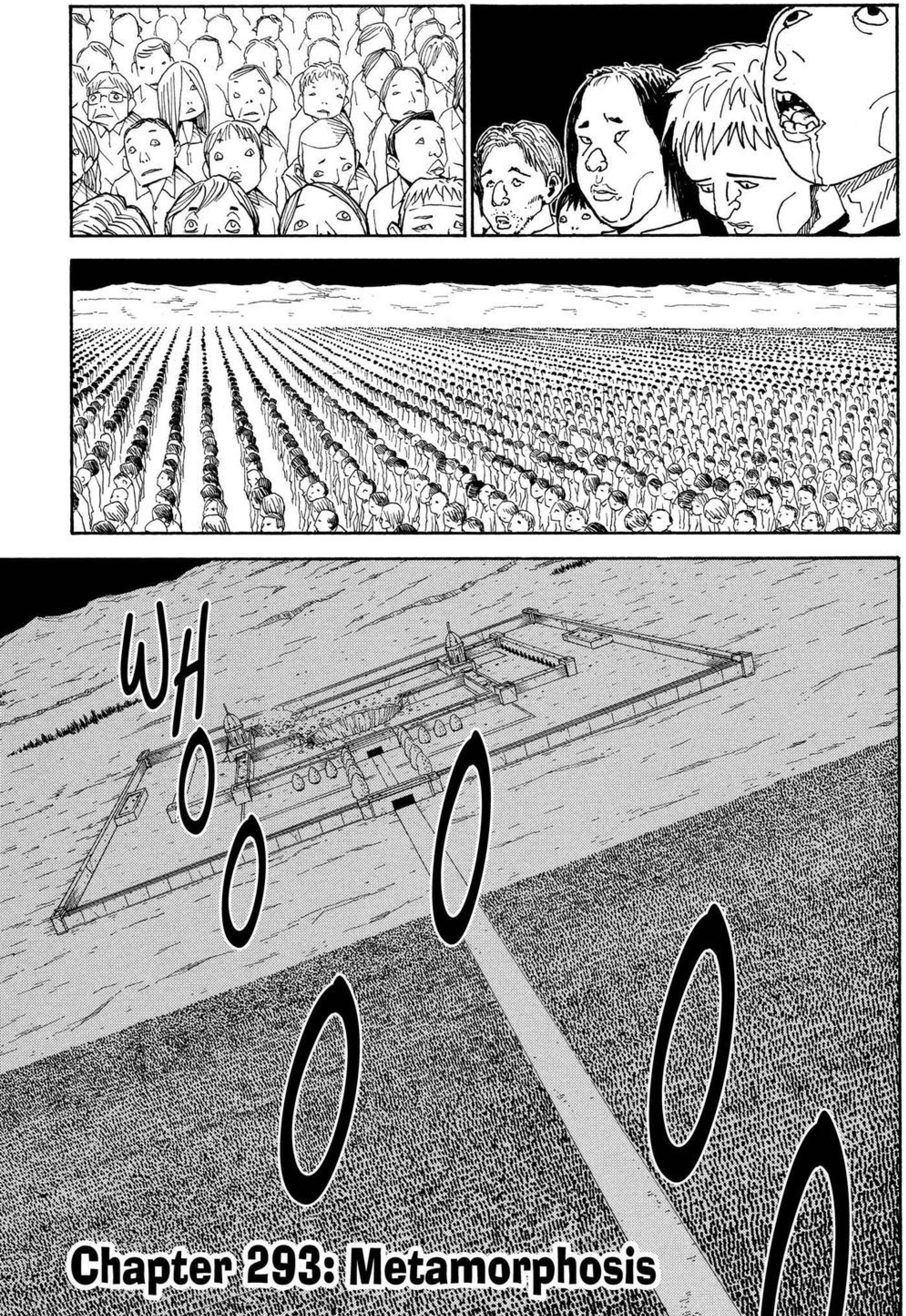

IT AMOUNTS TO CHOOSING A SINGLE NEEDLE FROM A PILE...
...AND PIERCING ITS EYE WITH ABSOLUTE PRECISION. THIS MAY BE A HEAVY UNDER-TAKING...
HEH.
...BUT IT IS NOT BE-YOND ME!!
I CAN DO IT!!


OLD SOLDIER...
...I'M COUNTING ON YOU.
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
LET ME FINISH MY GAME.
DON'T COL-LAPSE BEFORE THEN!
HE'S LAUGHING.
BUT LOOK WHO'S TALKING! I'M ENJOYING THIS TOO!

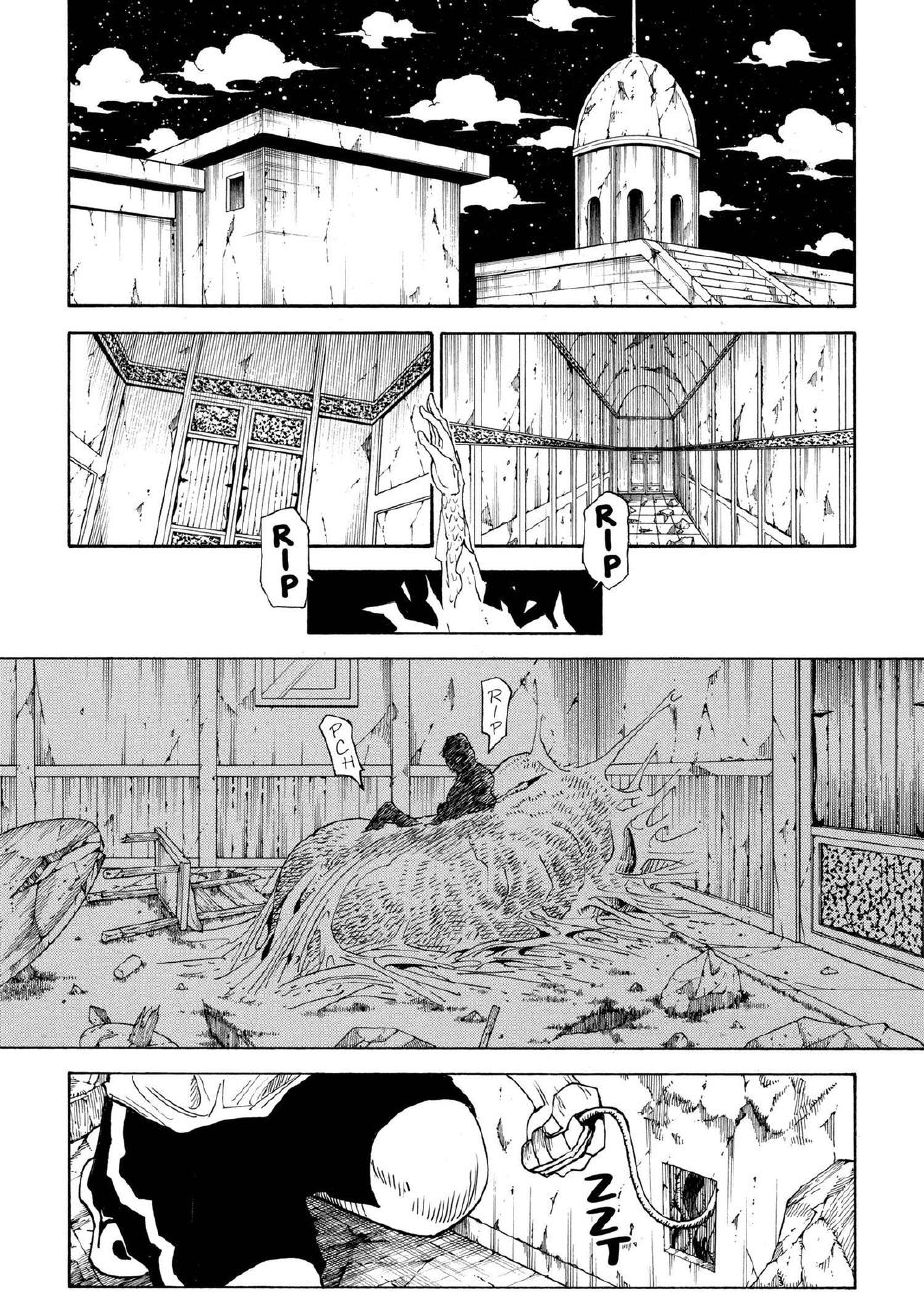

HE INSTANTLY RECOVERS FROM ANY BLOW, FROM ANY ANGLE, AND MOVES TO COUNTERATTACK.
IF I MAKE A SINGLE MISTAKE, HIS SPEED WILL ROB ME OF THE TIME I HAVE TO MAKE MY NEXT MOVE.
IF I LOSE MY CONCENTRATION...
...I'LL BE TORN FROM LIMB TO LIMB AND IT'LL ALL BE OVER!!
THIS IS A BATTLE OF ENDURANCE AND FOCUS.
I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO KEEP PLAYING THE BEST POSSIBLE MOVE.
WHEN I RUN OUT...
IT WILL BE YOUR END!!

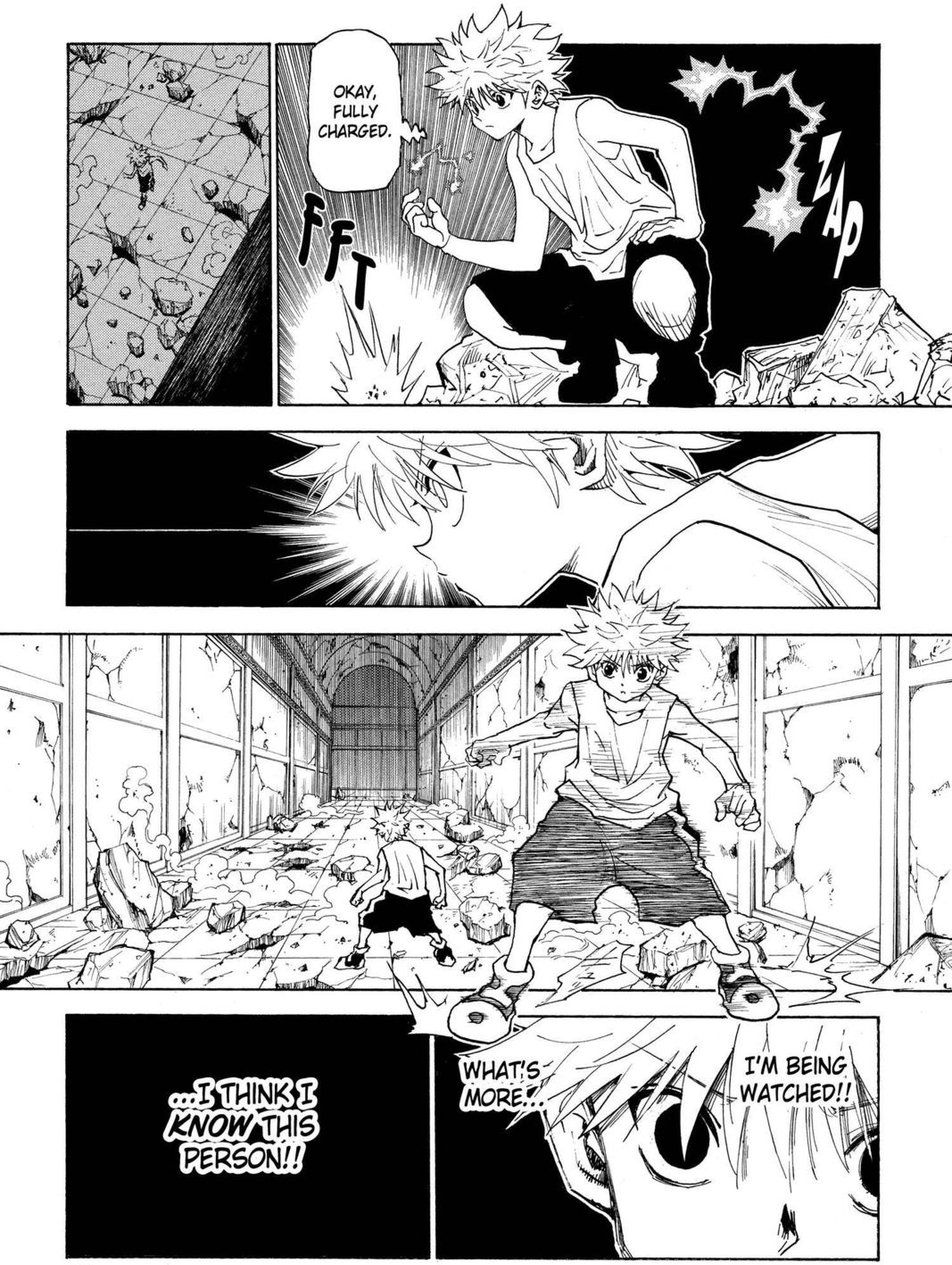

THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK...
...KING OF ANTS.
JUST TRY ME.
CHECK-MATE ME IF YOU CAN.

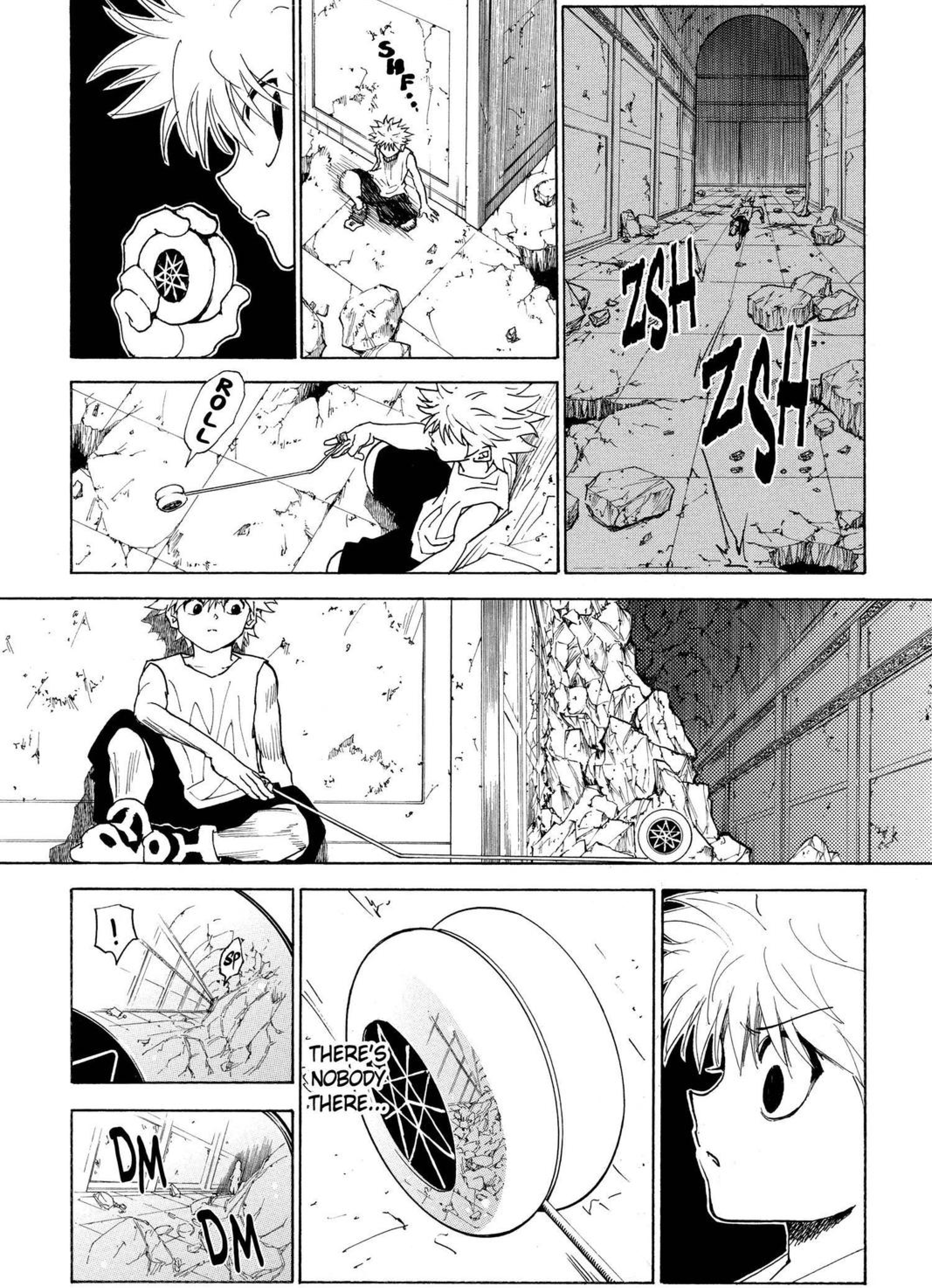

I'LL SHOW YOU...
...THE ZERO HAND.

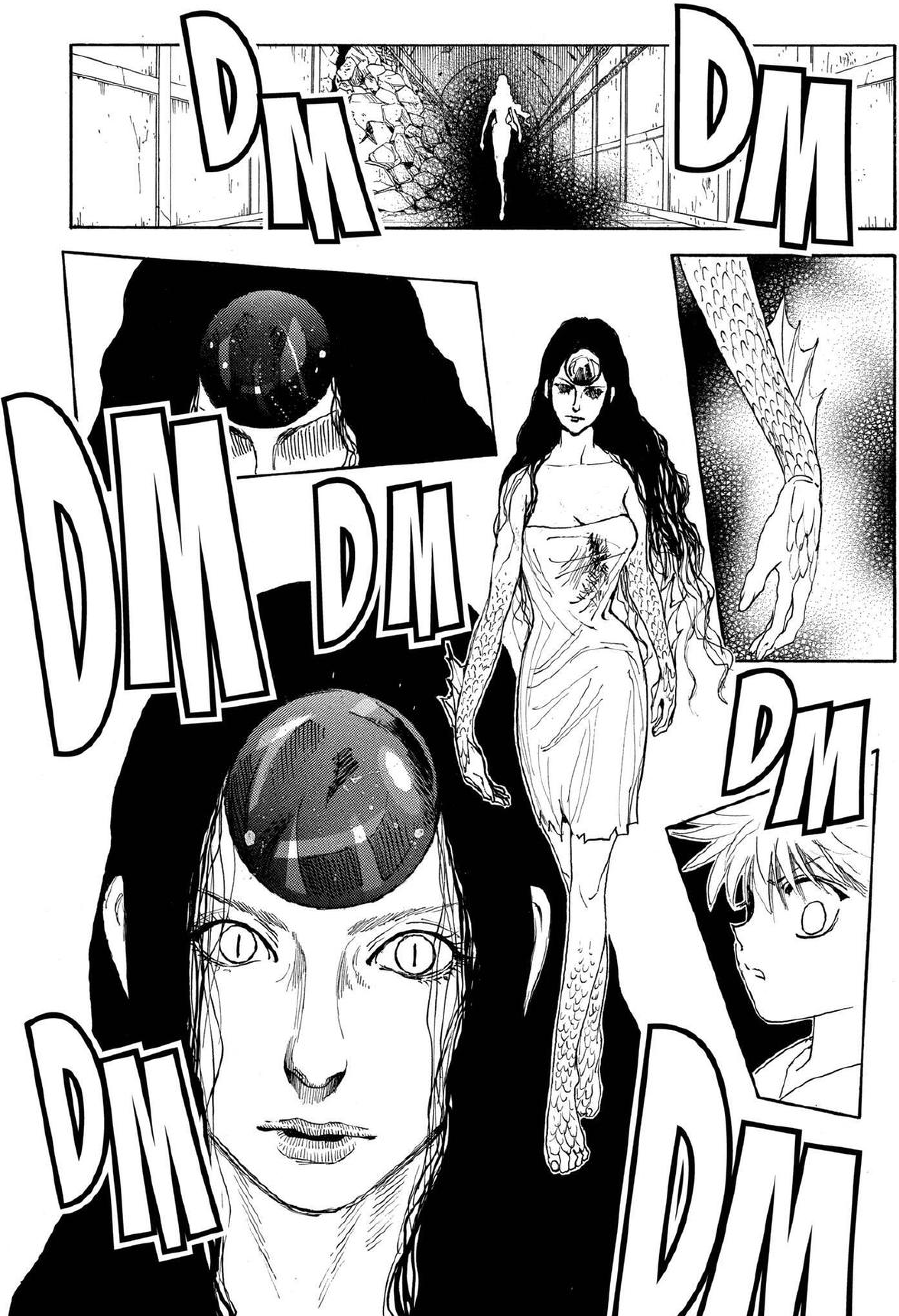


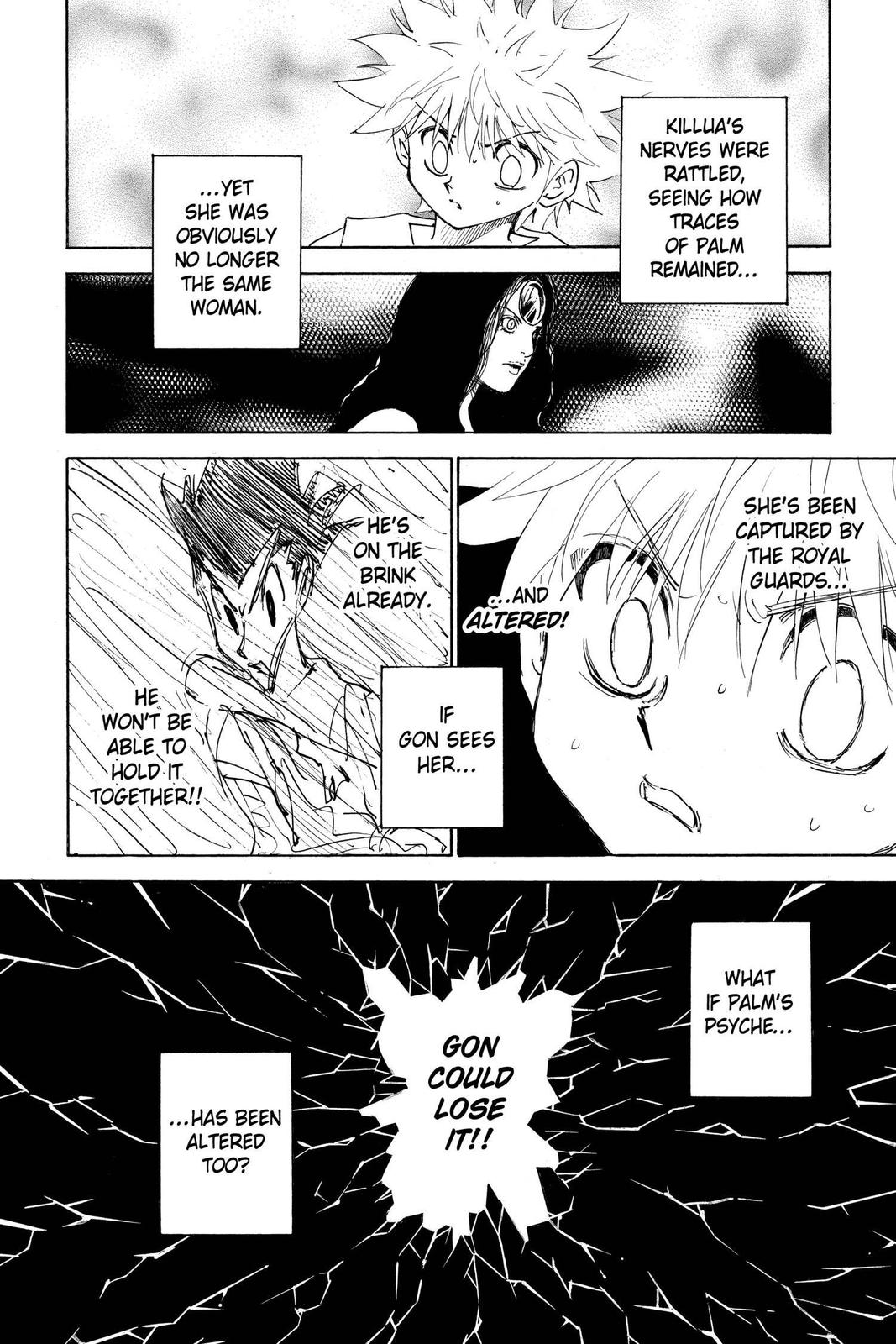
Chapter 293: Metamorphosis

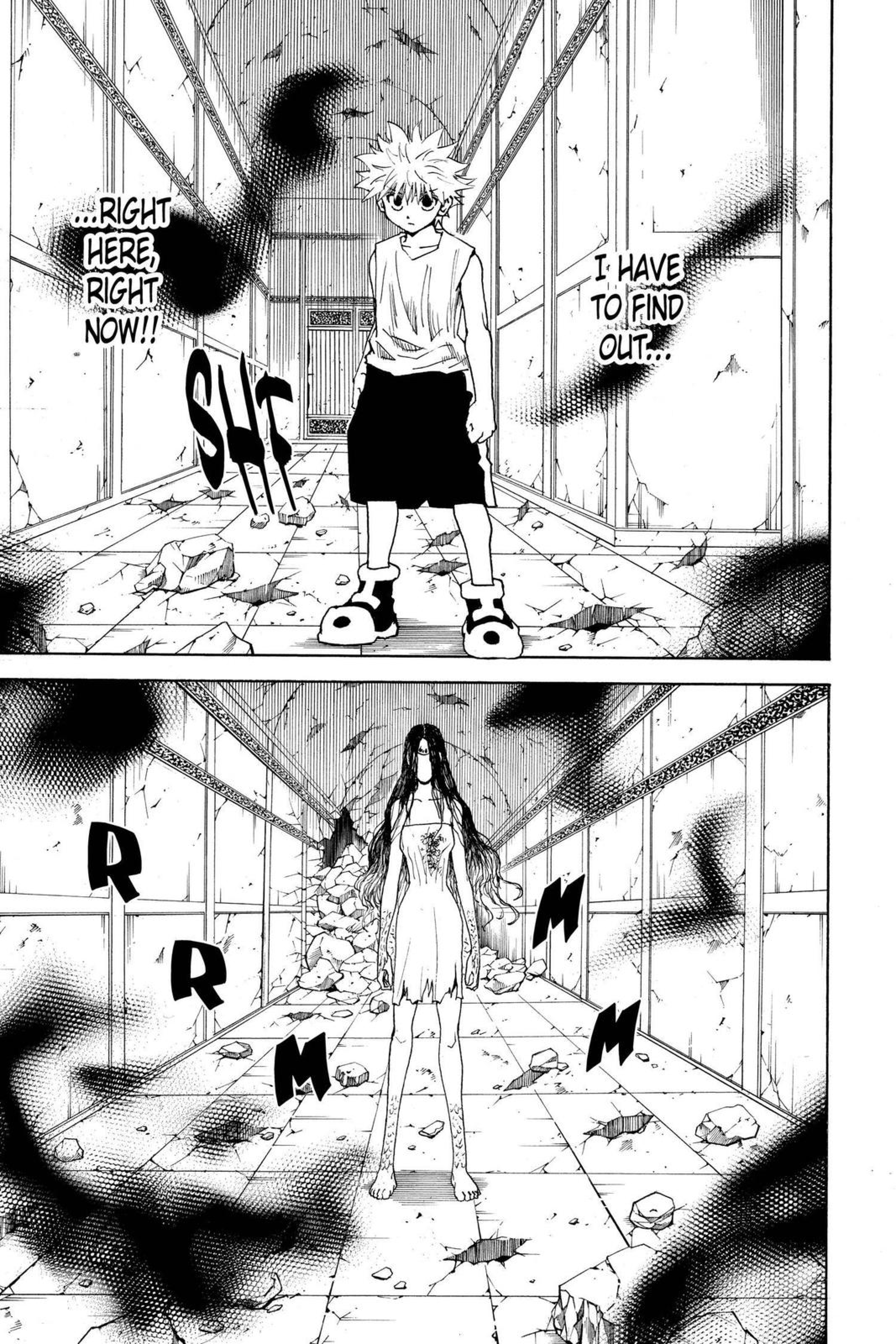

RIP
RIP
RIP
PCH
ZZZT

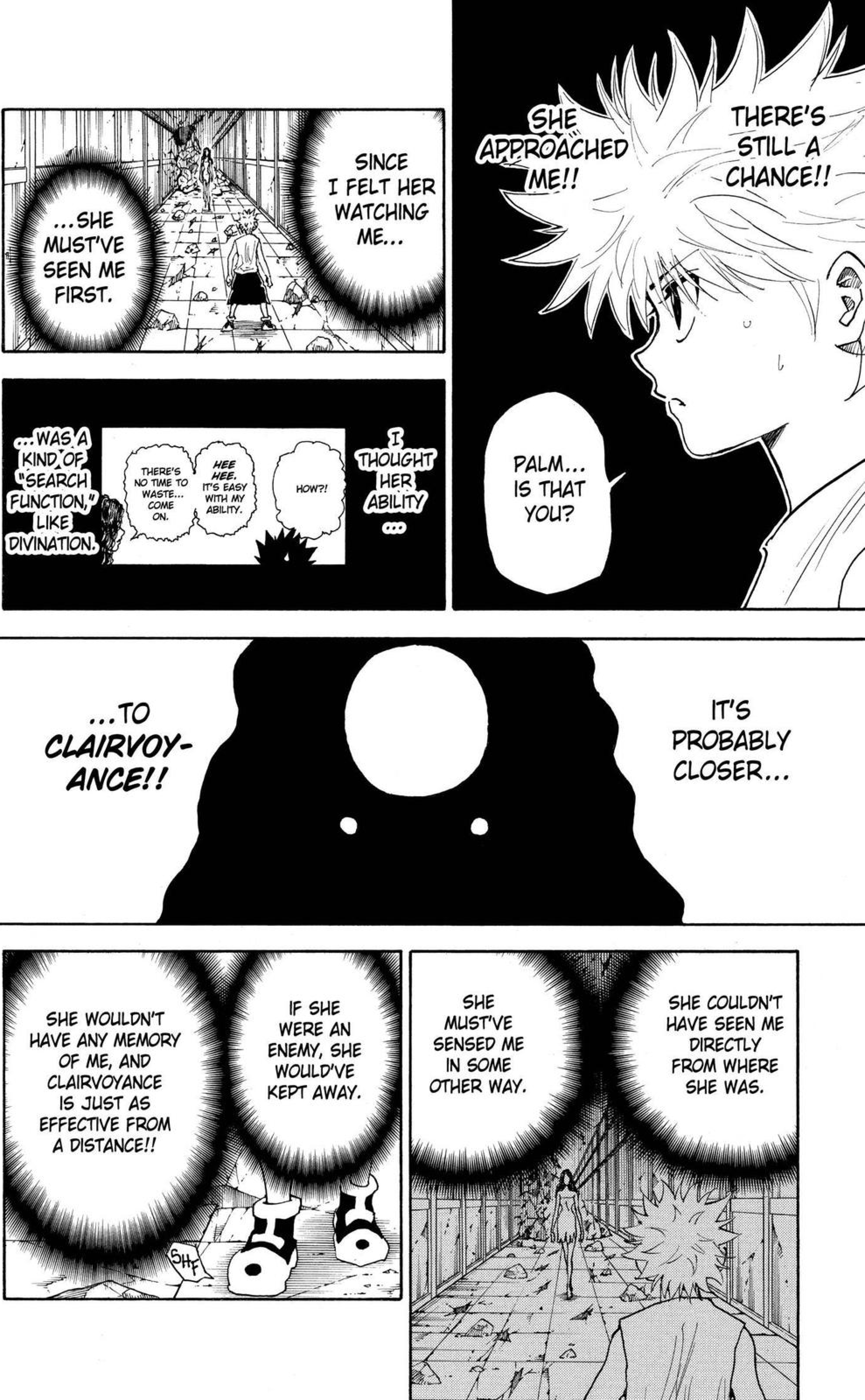

ZAP
OKAY, FULLY CHARGED.
FFT
WHAT'S MORE...
I'M BEING WATCHED!!
...I THINK I *KNOW* THIS PERSON!!

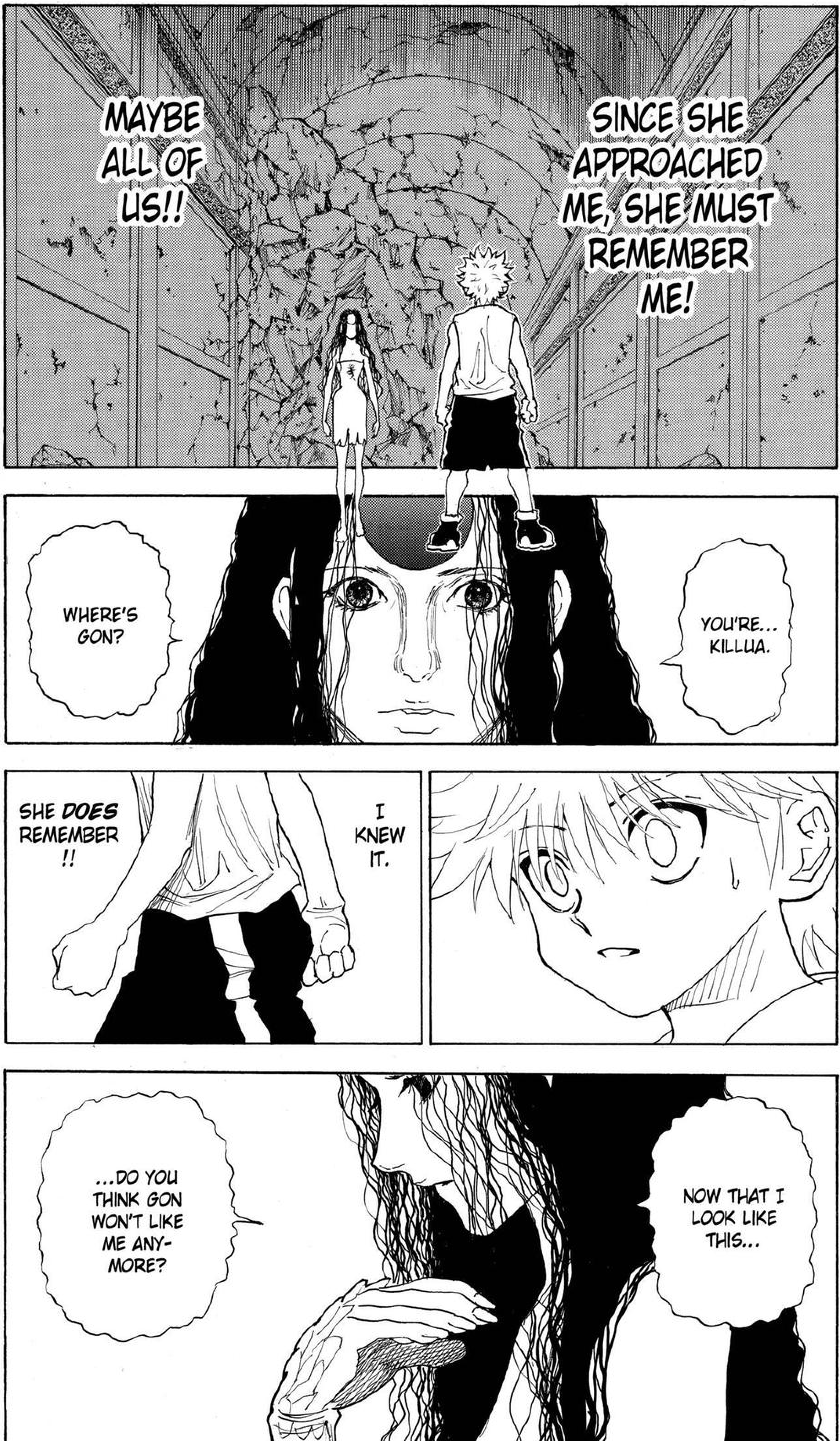

ZSH
ZSH
SHF...
ROLL
THERE'S NOBODY THERE...
!
SP
DM
DM

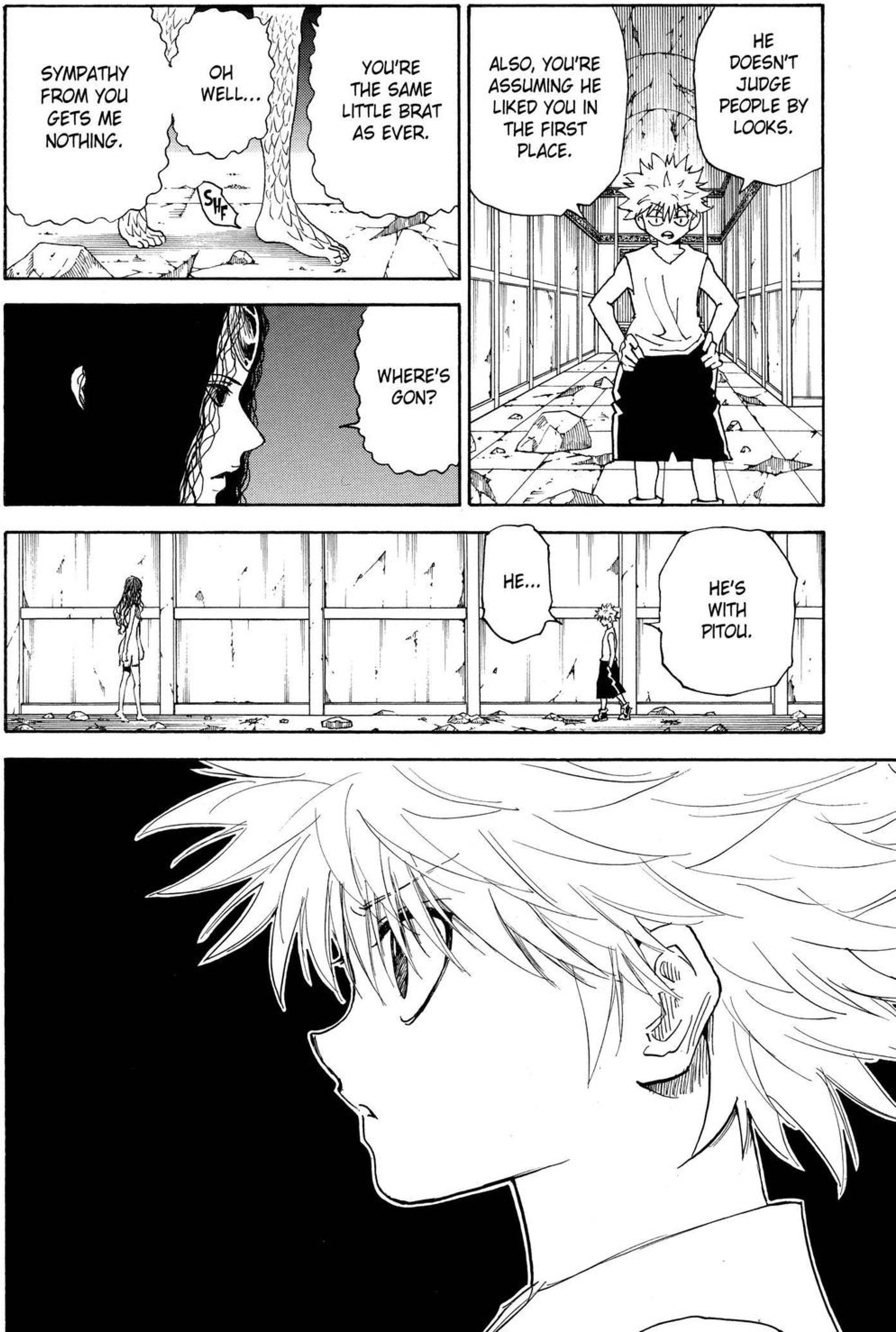

DM
DM
DM
DM
DM
DM
DM
DM

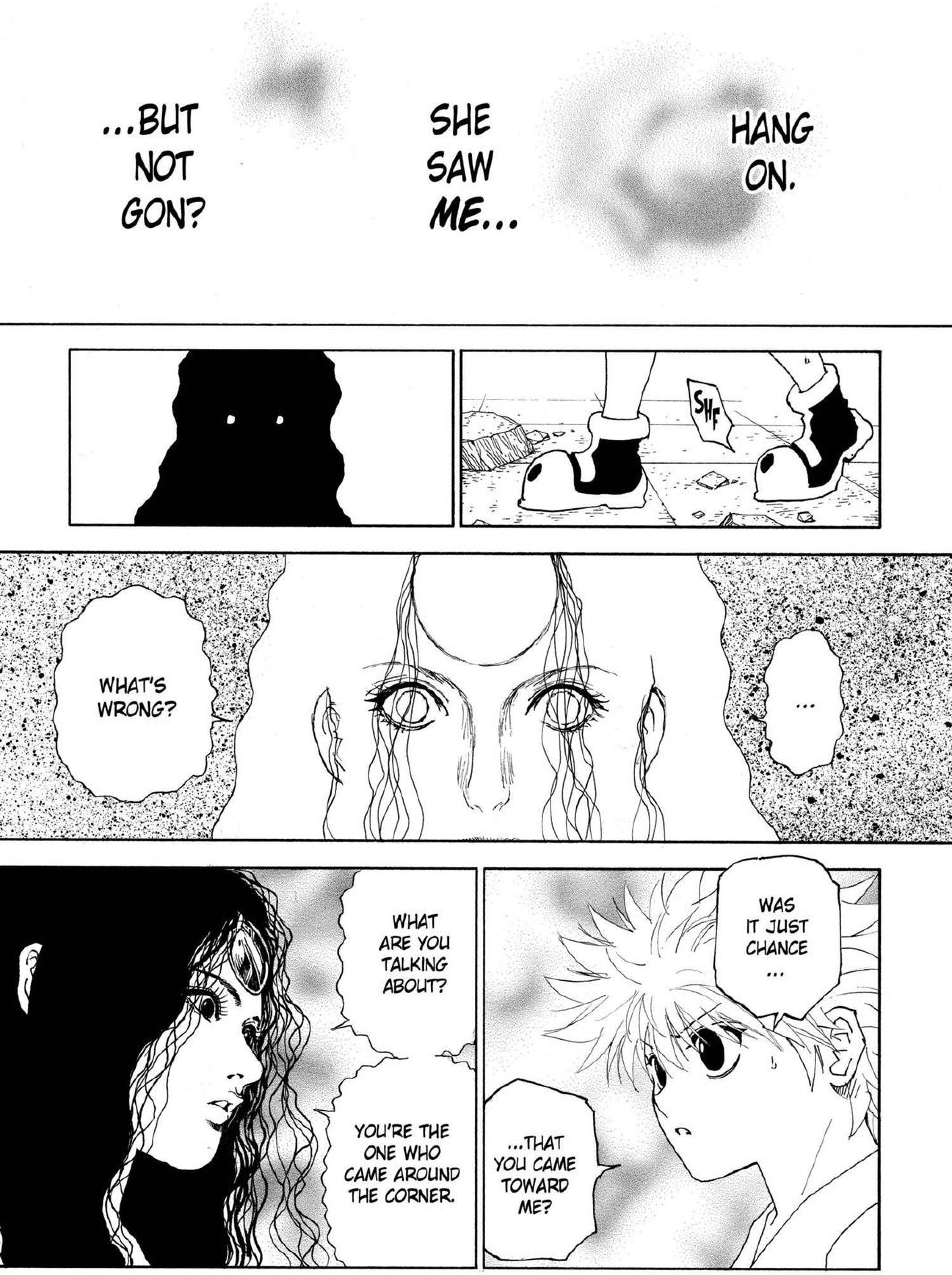

KILLUA'S NERVES WERE RATTLED, SEEING HOW TRACES OF PALM REMAINED...
...YET SHE WAS OBVIOUSLY NO LONGER THE SAME WOMAN.
SHE'S BEEN CAPTURED BY THE ROYAL GUARDS...
...AND ALTERED!
IF GON SEES HER...
HE'S ON THE BRINK ALREADY.
HE WON'T BE ABLE TO HOLD IT TOGETHER!!
WHAT IF PALM'S PSYCHE...
...HAS BEEN ALTERED TOO?
GON COULD LOSE IT!!

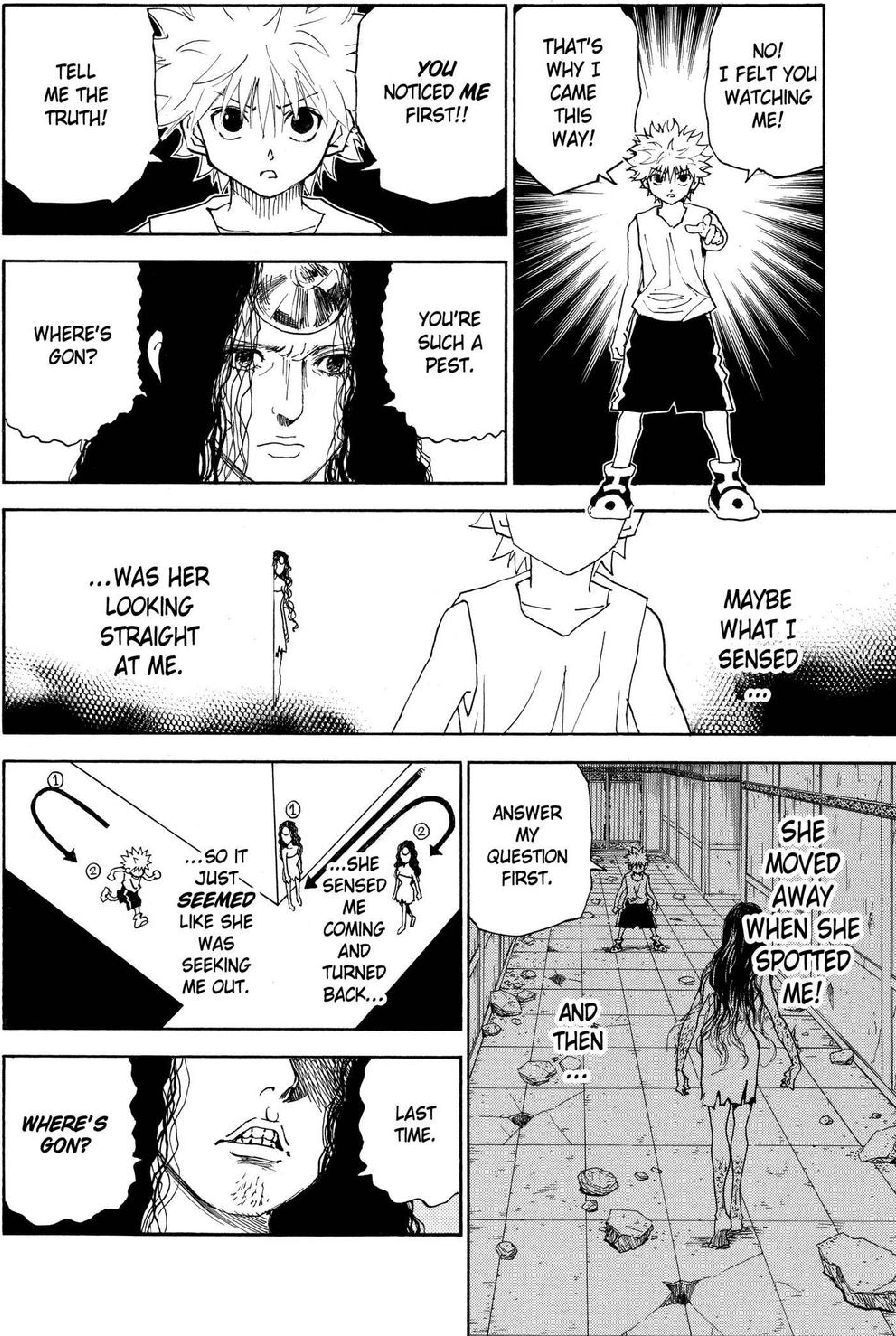

I HAVE TO FIND OUT...
...RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW!!
SHF
R R M
M M

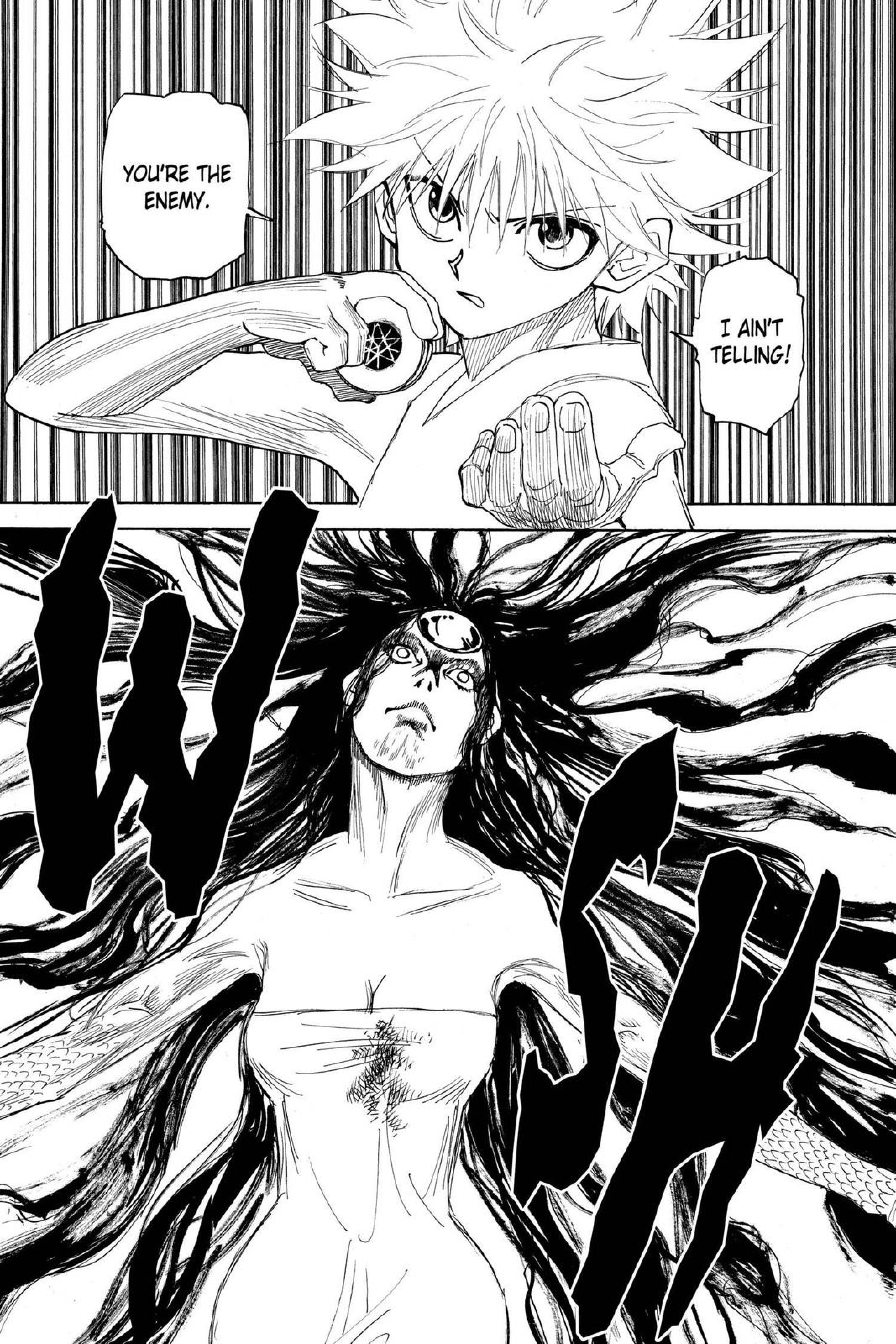

THERE'S STILL A CHANCE!!
SHE APPROACHED ME!!
PALM... IS THAT YOU?
SINCE I FELT HER WATCHING ME...
...SHE MUST'VE SEEN ME FIRST.
I THOUGHT HER ABILITY...
HOW?!
HEE HEE. IT'S EASY WITH MY ABILITY.
THERE'S NO TIME TO WASTE... COME ON.
...WAS A KIND OF "SEARCH FUNCTION," LIKE DIVINATION.
IT'S PROBABLY CLOSER...
...TO ***CLAIRVOYANCE!!***
SHE COULDN'T HAVE SEEN ME DIRECTLY FROM WHERE SHE WAS.
SHE MUST'VE SENSED ME IN SOME OTHER WAY.
IF SHE WERE AN ENEMY, SHE WOULD'VE KEPT AWAY.
SHE WOULDN'T HAVE ANY MEMORY OF ME, AND CLAIRVOYANCE IS JUST AS EFFECTIVE FROM A DISTANCE!!
SHF

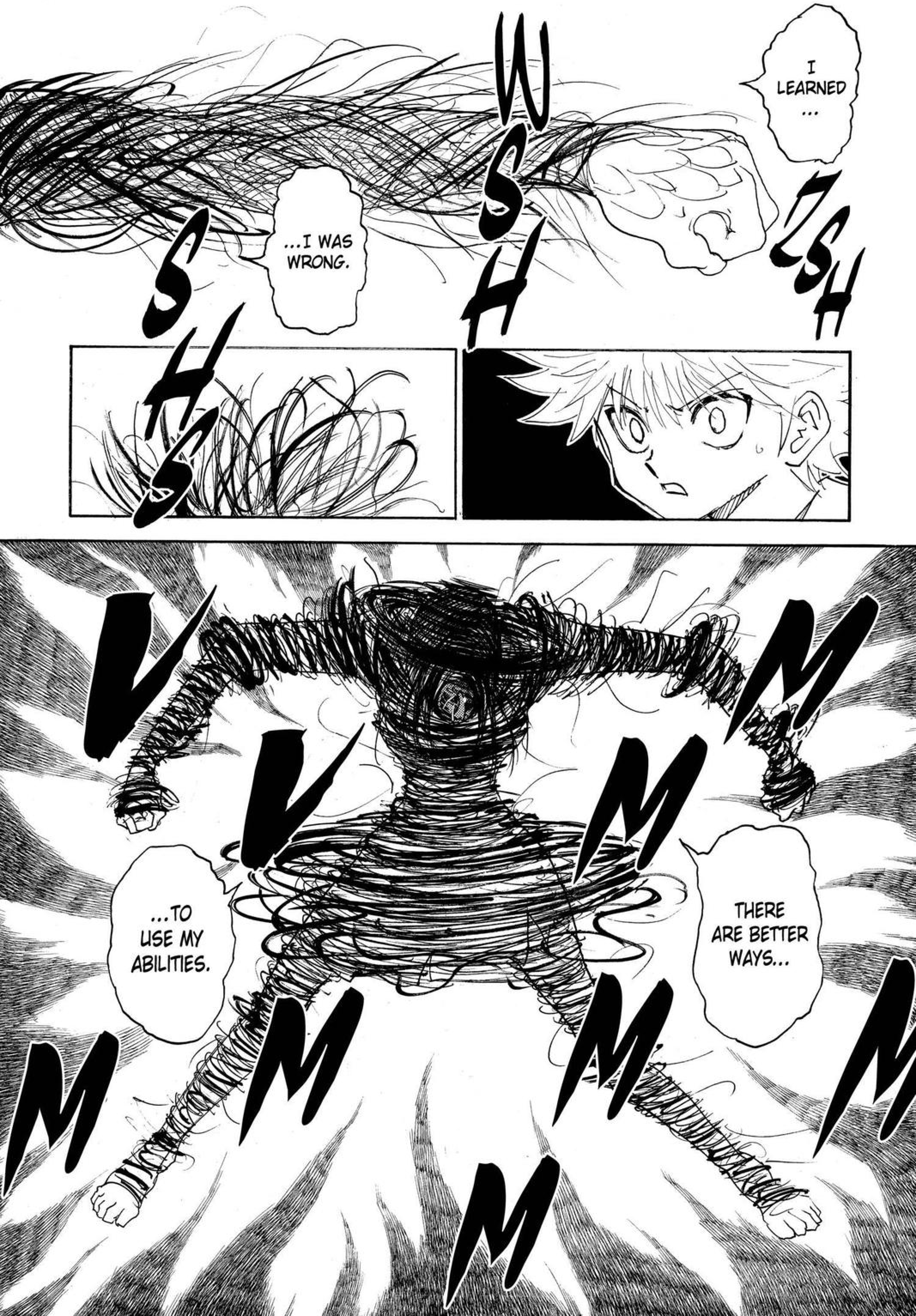

SINCE SHE APPROACHED ME, SHE MUST REMEMBER ME!
MAYBE ALL OF US!!
YOU'RE... KILLUA.
WHERE'S GON?
I KNEW IT.
SHE *DOES* REMEMBER !!
NOW THAT I LOOK LIKE THIS...
...DO YOU THINK GON WON'T LIKE ME ANY-MORE?

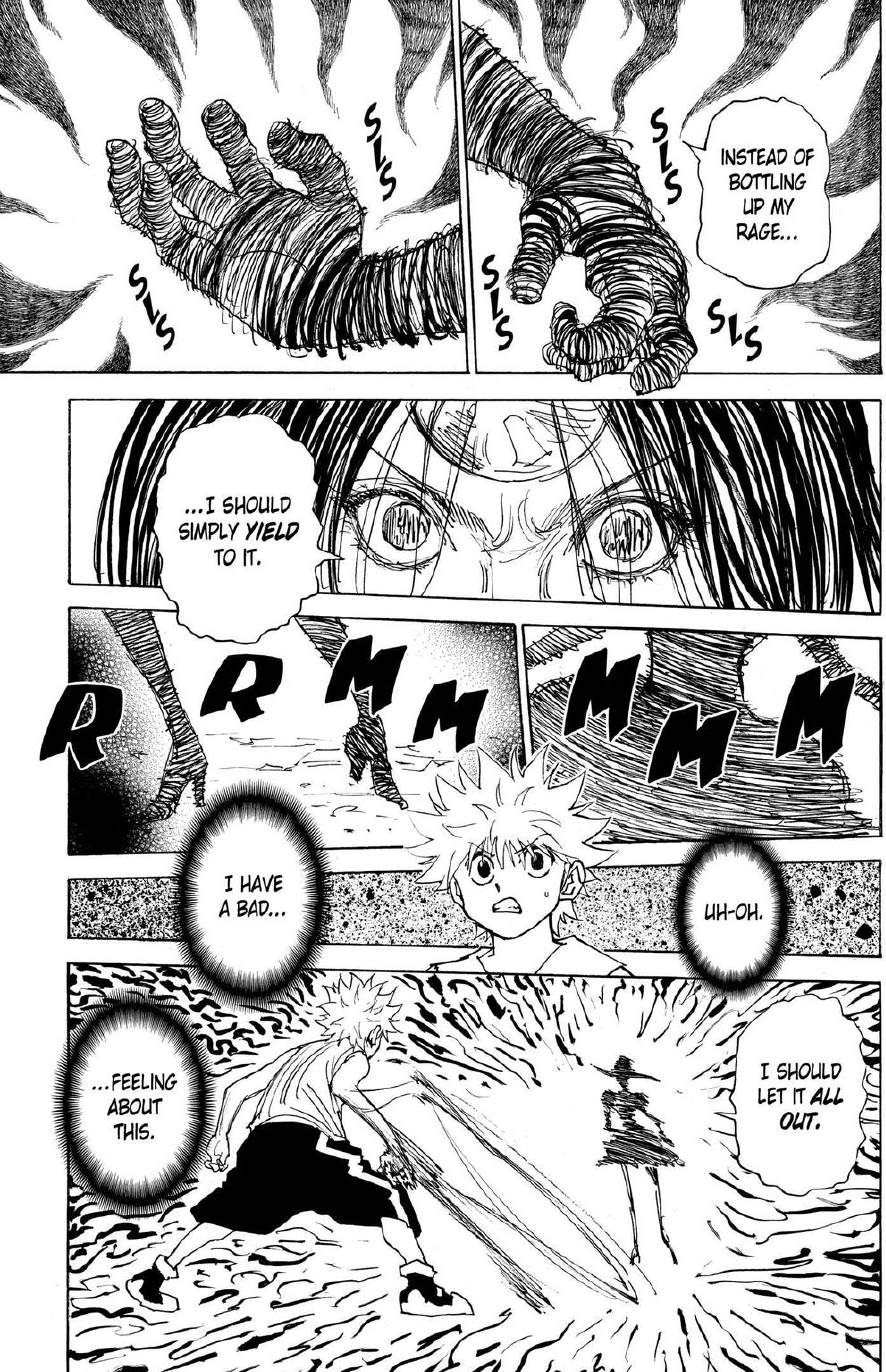

HE DOESN'T JUDGE PEOPLE BY LOOKS.
ALSO, YOU'RE ASSUMING HE LIKED YOU IN THE FIRST PLACE.
YOU'RE THE SAME LITTLE BRAT AS EVER.
OH WELL...
SYMPATHY FROM YOU GETS ME NOTHING.
SHF
WHERE'S GON?
HE...
HE'S WITH PITOU.

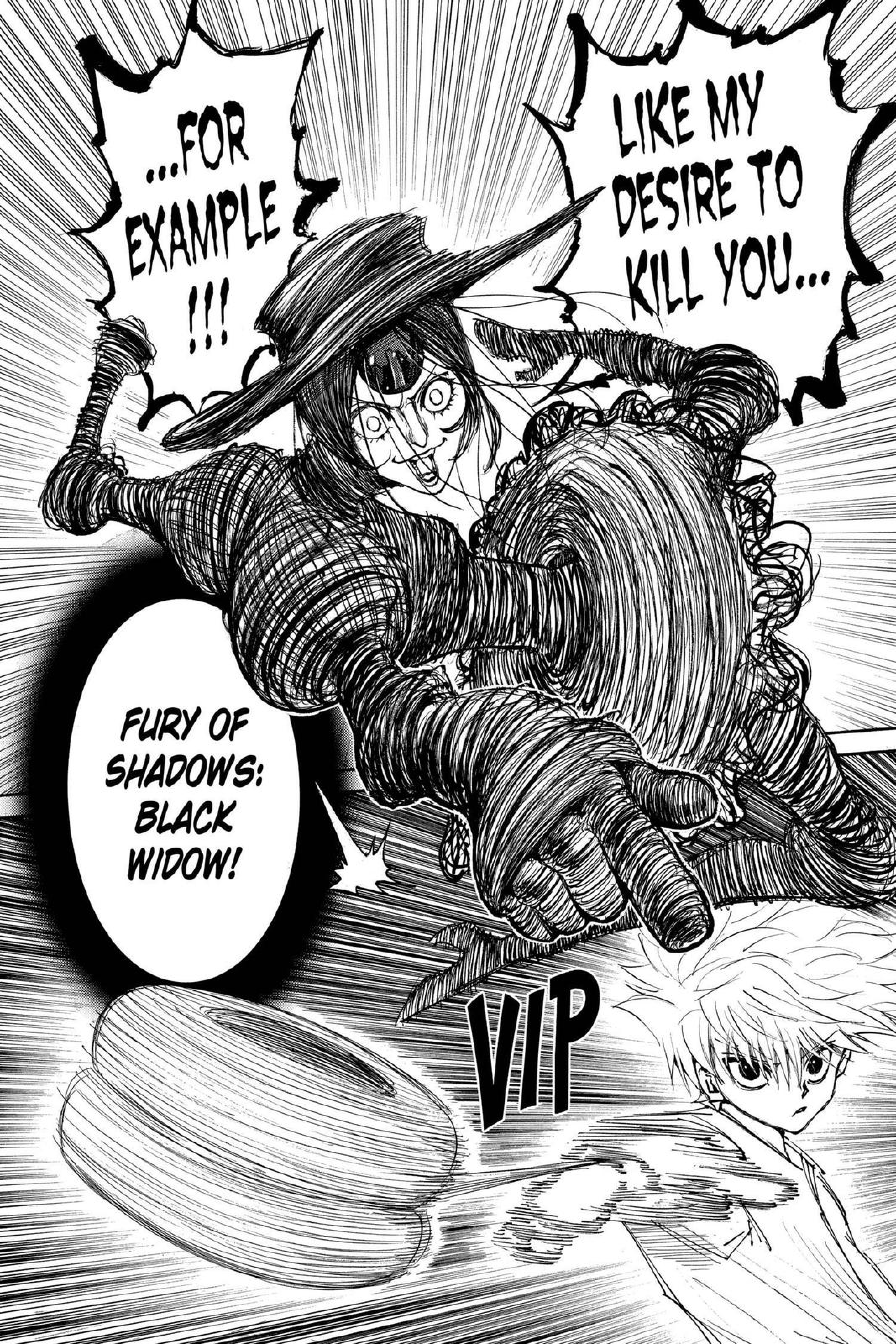

HANG ON.
SHE SAW *ME*...
...BUT NOT GON?
SHF
...
WHAT'S WRONG?
WAS IT JUST CHANCE ...
...THAT YOU CAME TOWARD ME?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO CAME AROUND THE CORNER.

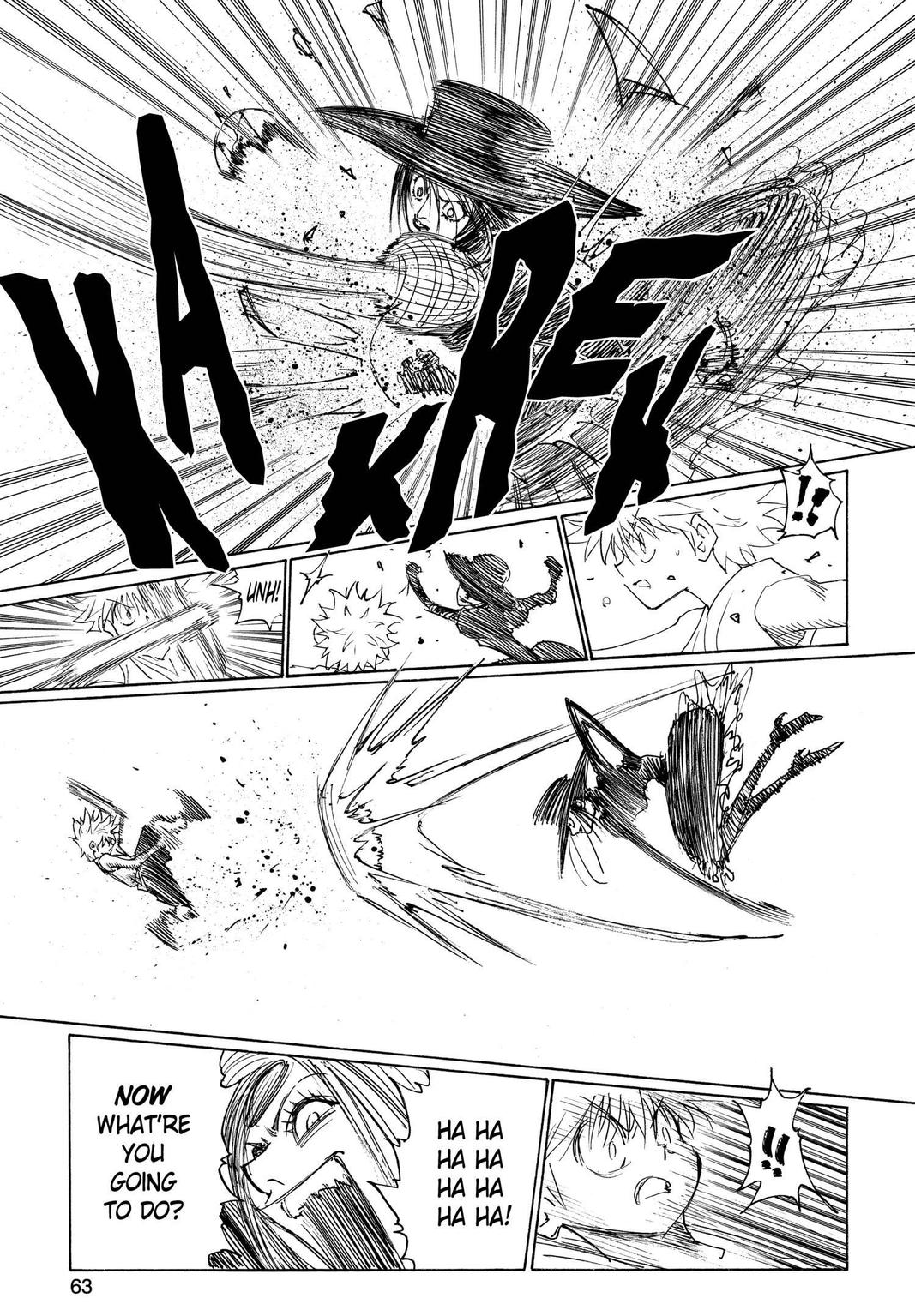

NO! I FELT YOU WATCHING ME!
THAT'S WHY I CAME THIS WAY!
YOU NOTICED *ME* FIRST!!
TELL ME THE TRUTH!
YOU'RE SUCH A PEST.
WHERE'S GON?
MAYBE WHAT I SENSED...
...WAS HER LOOKING STRAIGHT AT ME.
SHE MOVED AWAY WHEN SHE SPOTTED ME!
AND THEN...
①
②
...SHE SENSED ME COMING AND TURNED BACK...
①
②
...SO IT JUST *SEEMED* LIKE SHE WAS SEEKING ME OUT.
ANSWER MY QUESTION FIRST.
LAST TIME.
WHERE'S GON?

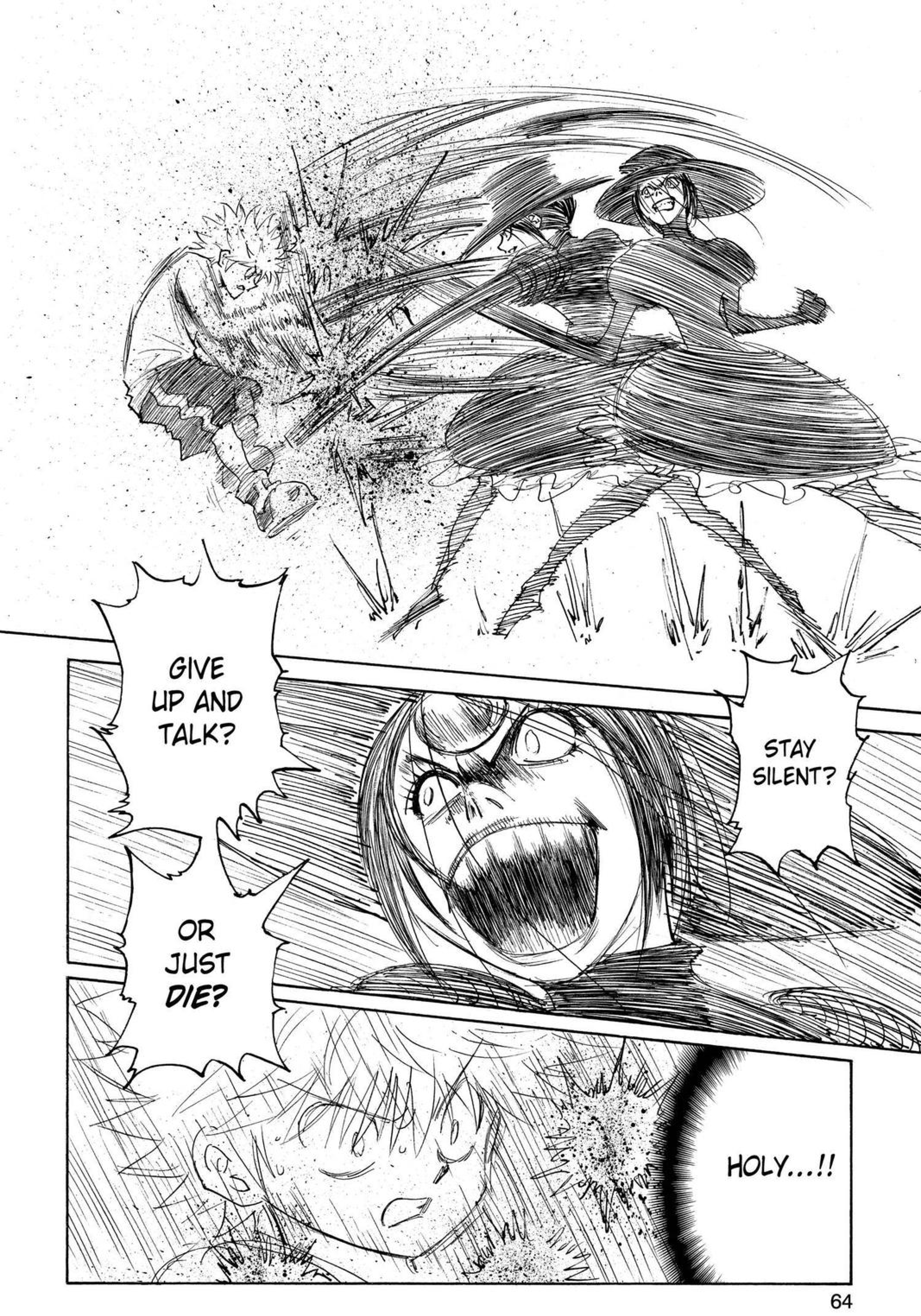

I AIN'T TELLING!
YOU'RE THE ENEMY.
WSH


I LEARNED ...
ZSH
WSH
...I WAS WRONG.
SHS
THERE ARE BETTER WAYS...
...TO USE MY ABILITIES.
VVMMMMMMMMM

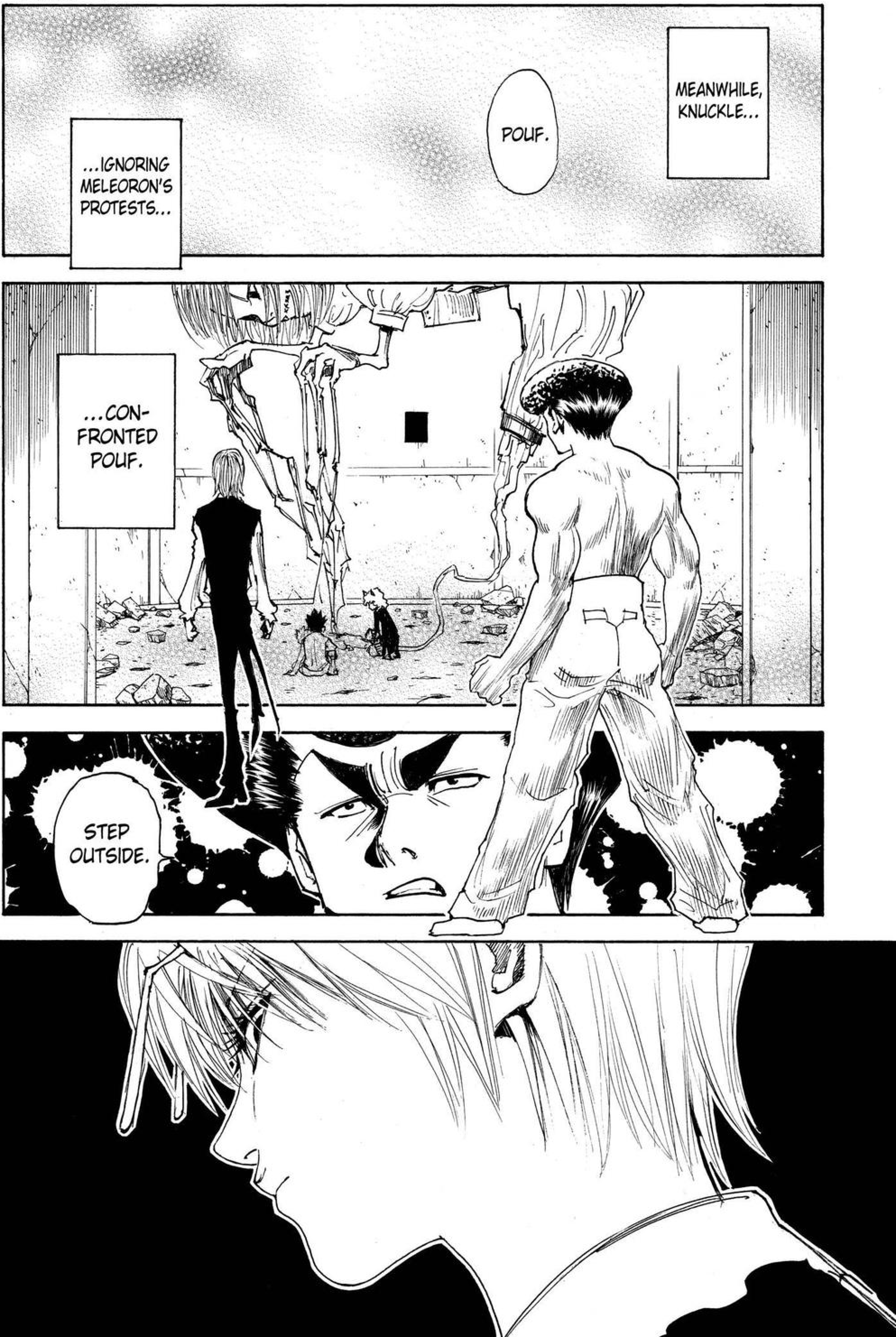

SLS
SLS
SLS
INSTEAD OF BOTTLING UP MY RAGE...
SLS
SLS
...I SHOULD SIMPLY YIELD TO IT.
RRMMMMMM
UH-OH.
I HAVE A BAD...
I SHOULD LET IT ALL OUT.
...FEELING ABOUT THIS.


LIKE MY DESIRE TO KILL YOU...
...FOR EXAMPLE !!!
FURY OF SHADOWS: BLACK WIDOW!
VIP

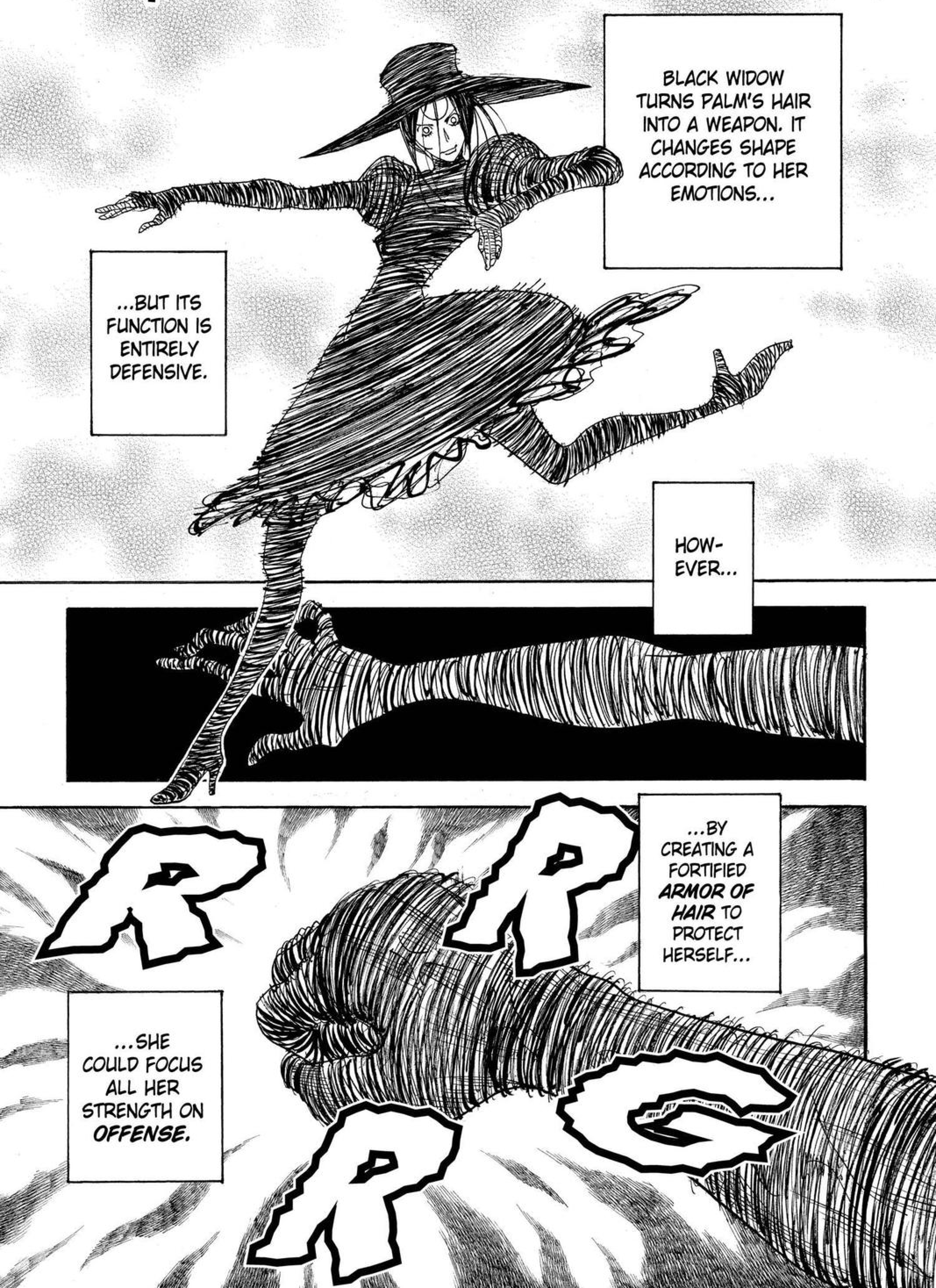

KA KRAK
!!
UNH!
!!
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA!
NOW WHAT'RE YOU GOING TO DO?

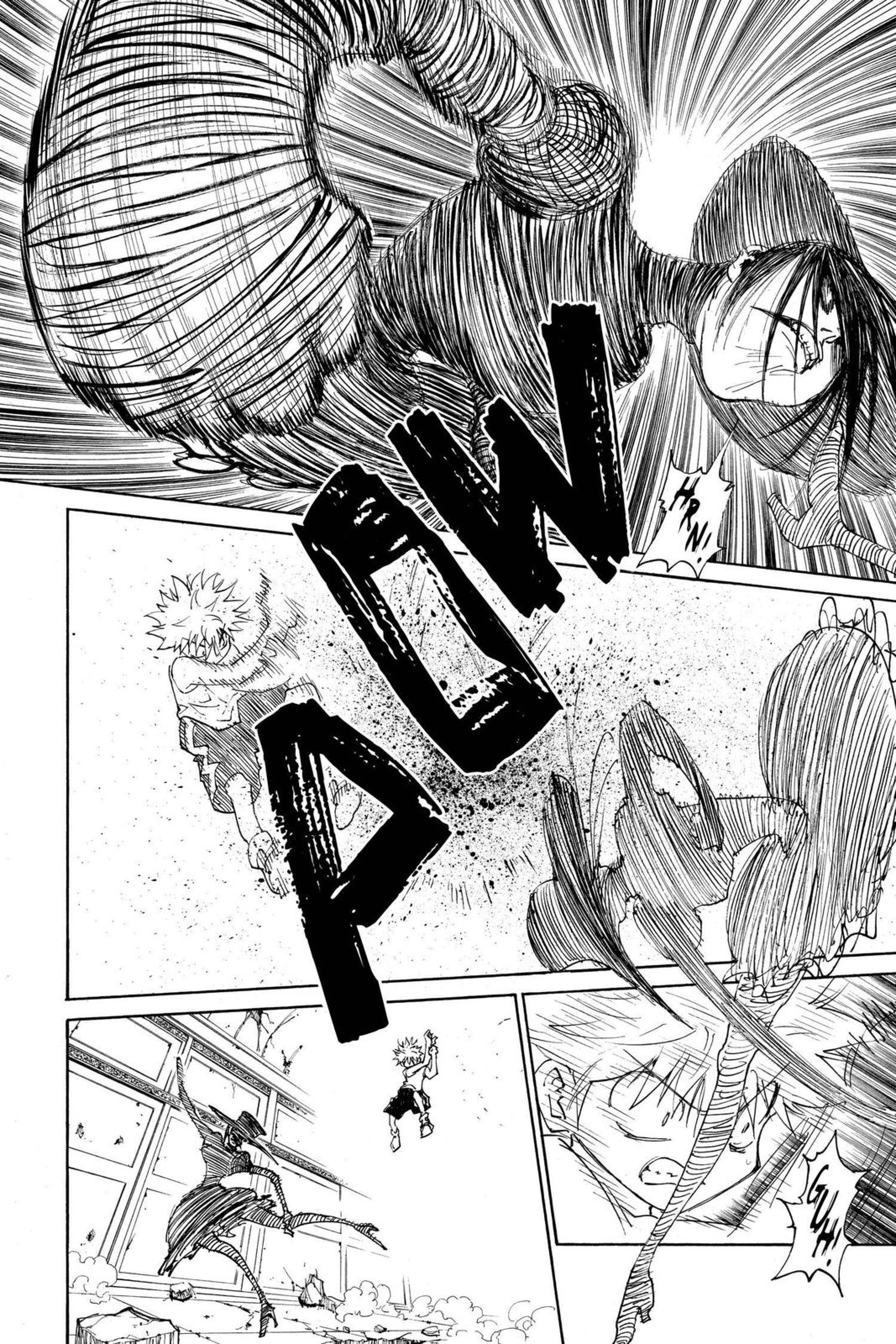

STAY SILENT?
GIVE UP AND TALK?
OR JUST *DIE?*
HOLY...!!

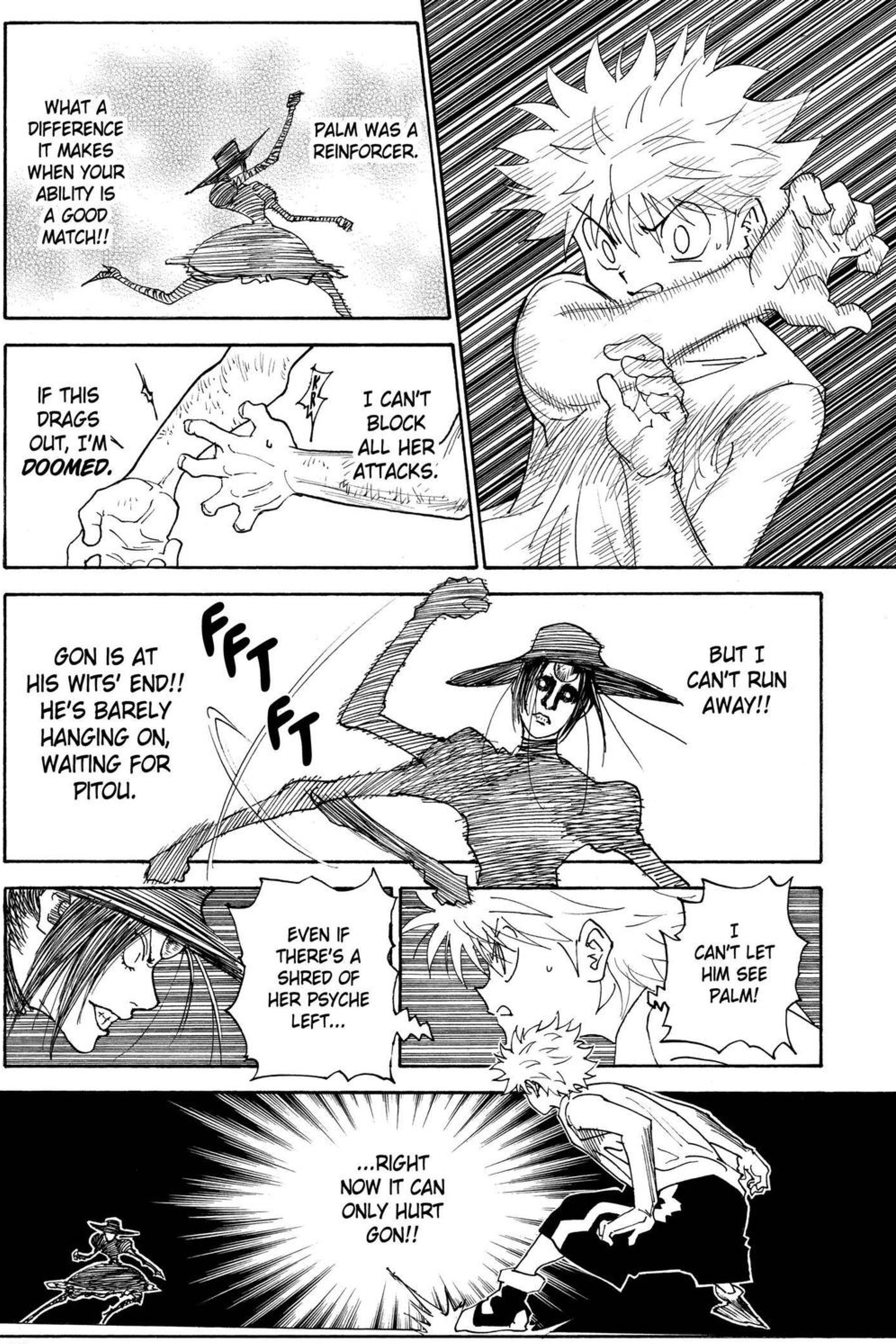
READ THIS WAY

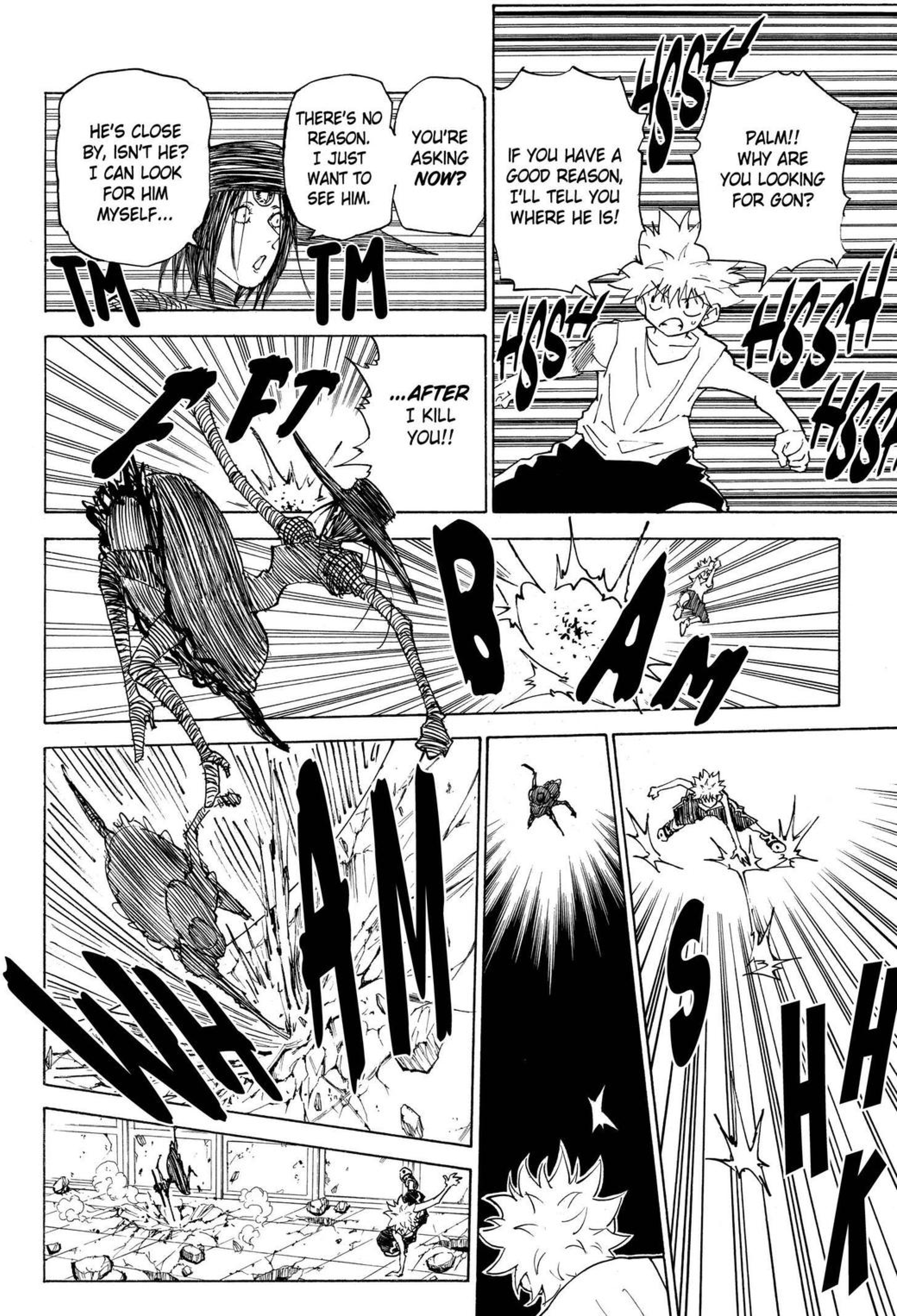

MEANWHILE, KNUCKLE...
POUF.
...IGNORING MELEORON'S PROTESTS...
...CONFRONTED POUF.
STEP OUTSIDE.

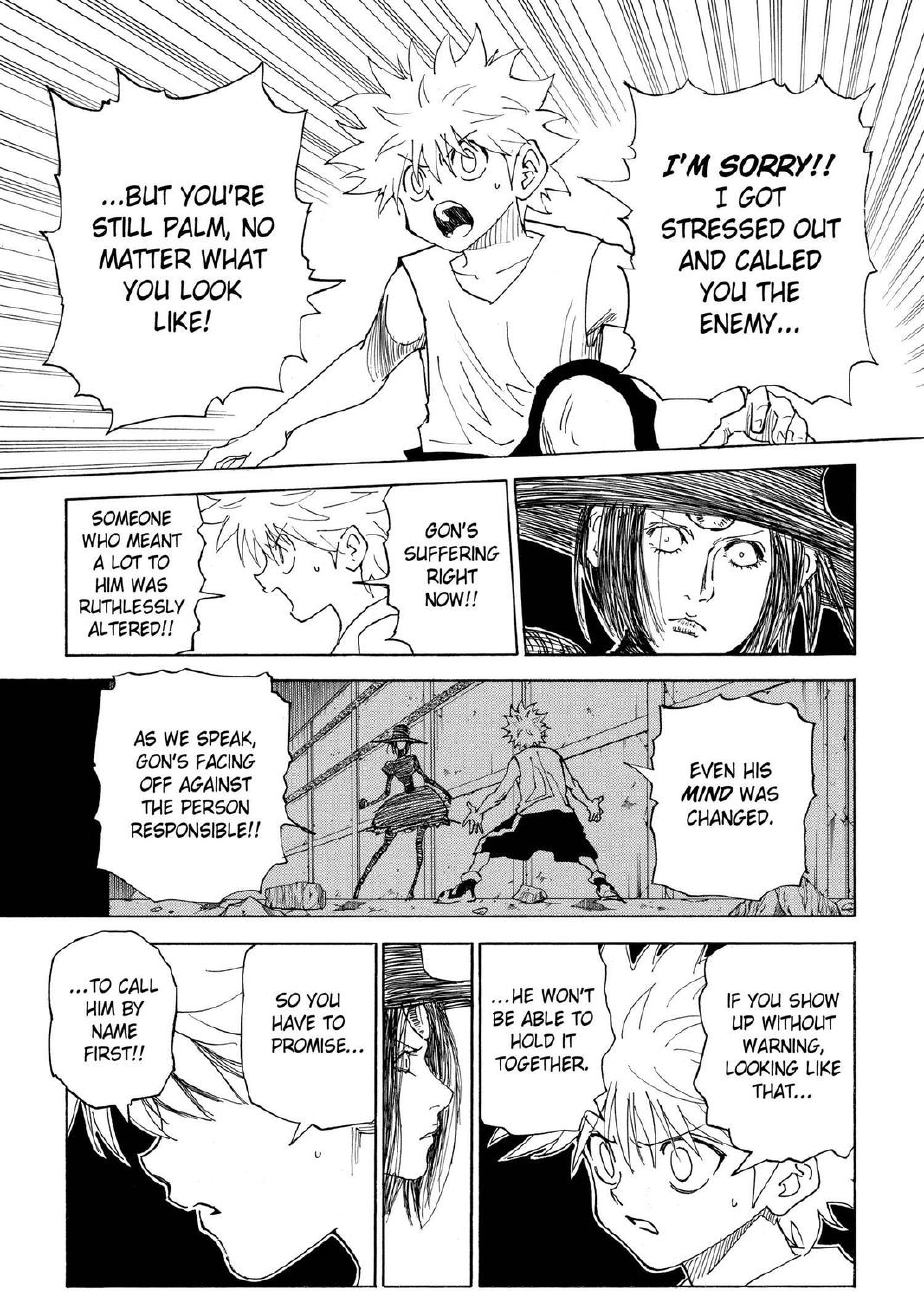
Chapter 294: Breakdown

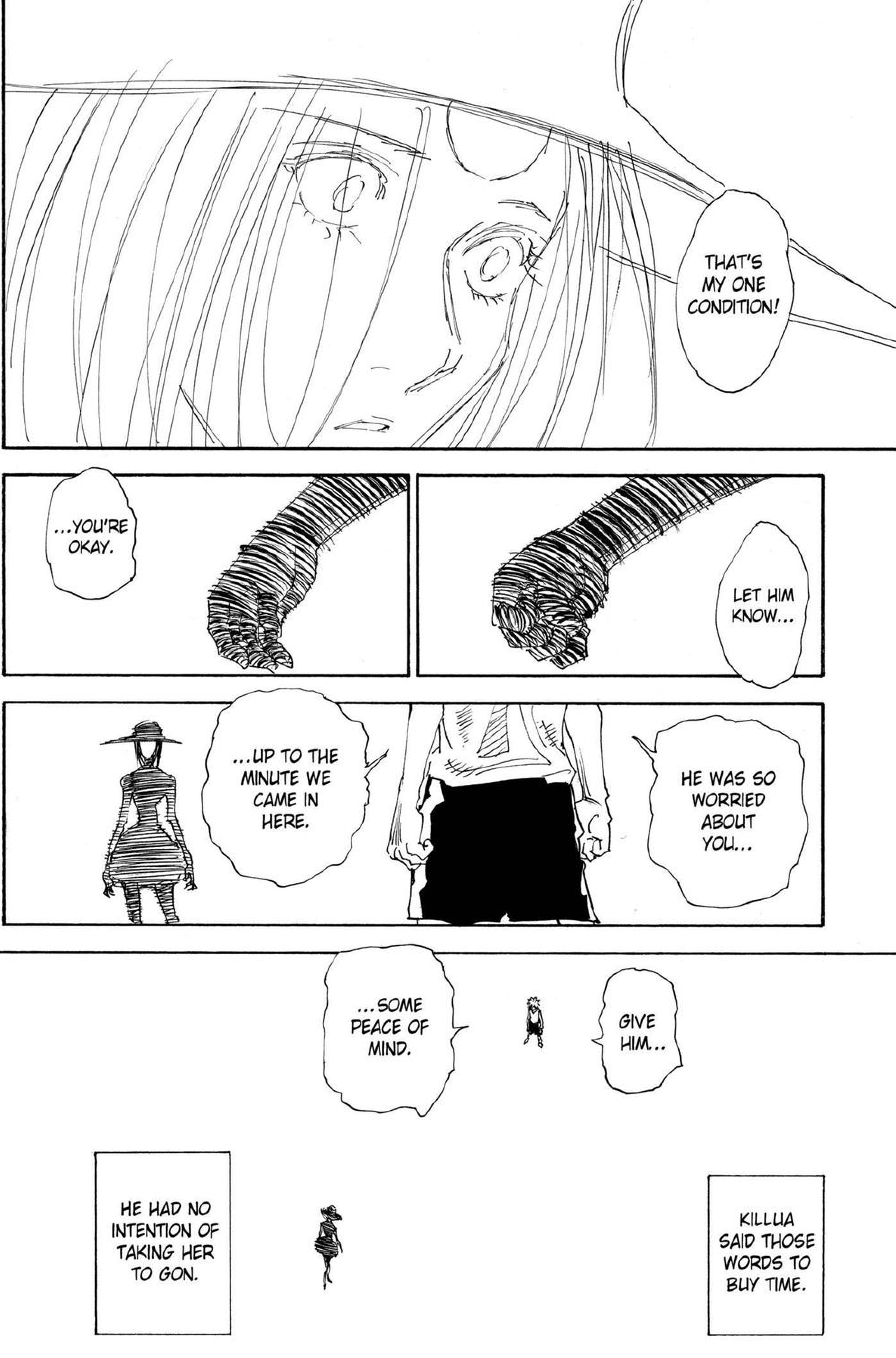

BLACK WIDOW TURNS PALM'S HAIR INTO A WEAPON. IT CHANGES SHAPE ACCORDING TO HER EMOTIONS...
...BUT ITS FUNCTION IS ENTIRELY DEFENSIVE.
HOW-EVER...
...BY CREATING A FORTIFIED **ARMOR OF HAIR** TO PROTECT HERSELF...
...SHE COULD FOCUS ALL HER STRENGTH ON **OFFENSE.**
RRRG

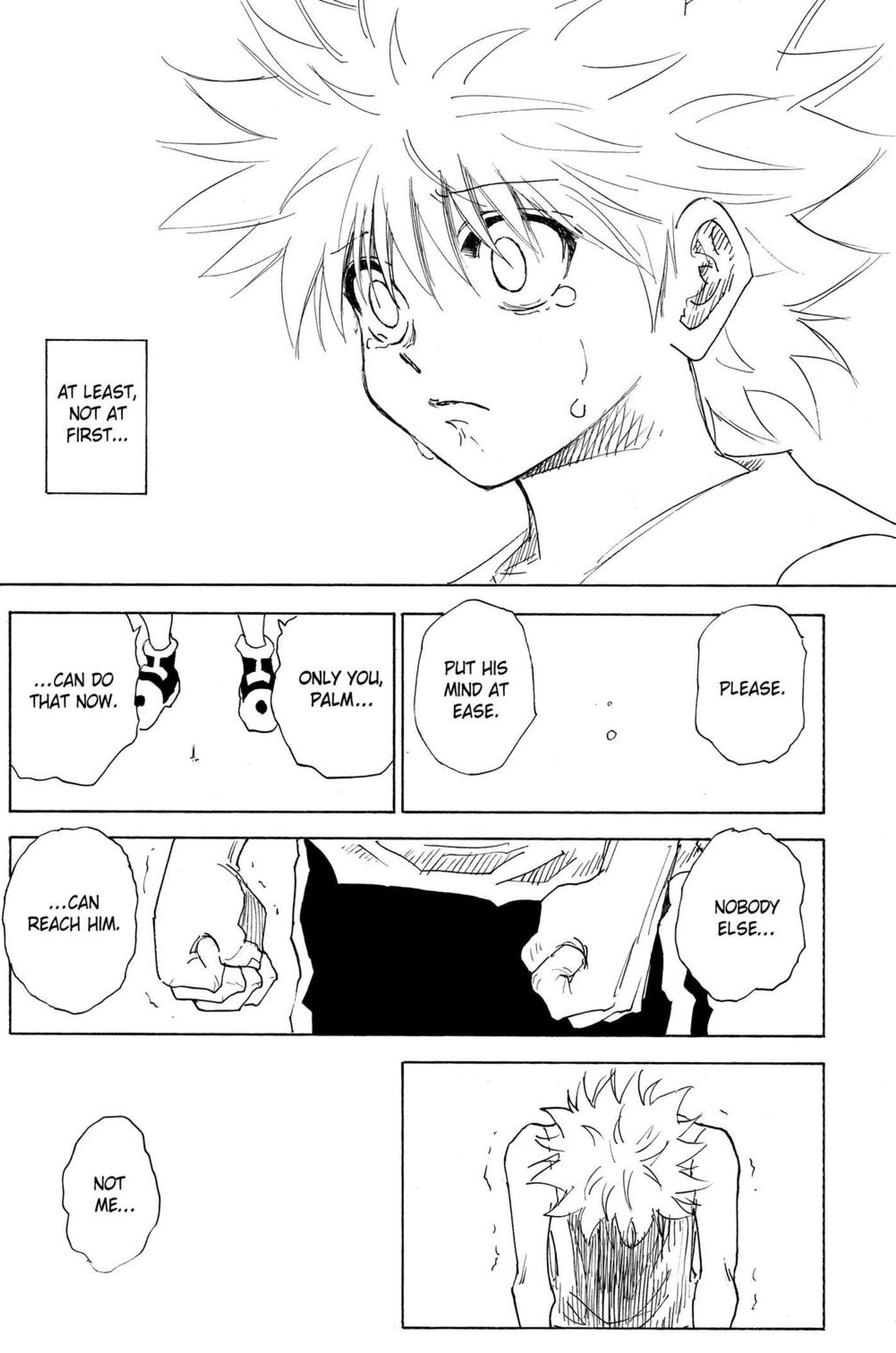

HRN!
POW
GUH!

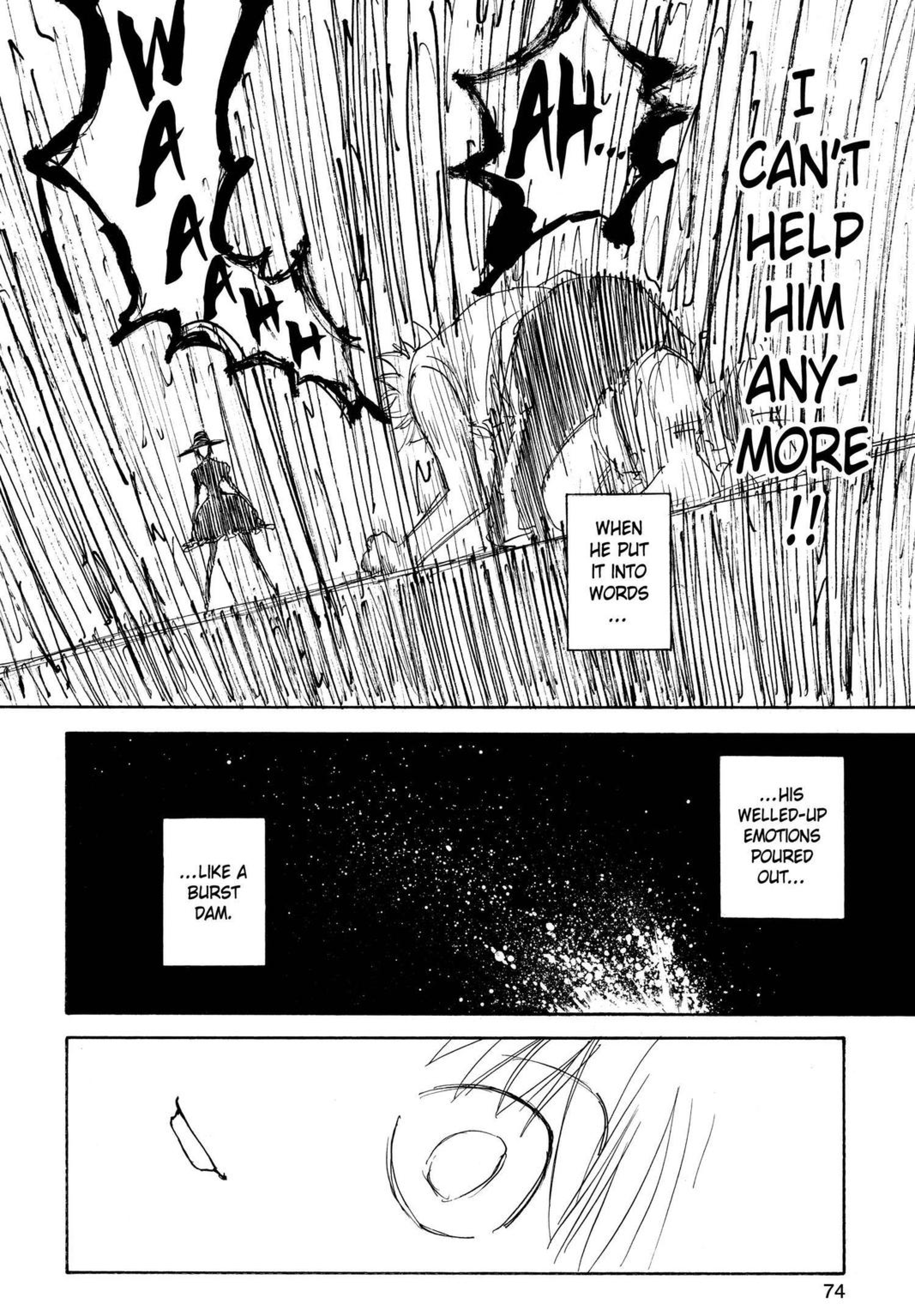

PALM WAS A REINFORCER.
WHAT A DIFFERENCE IT MAKES WHEN YOUR ABILITY IS A GOOD MATCH!!
I CAN'T BLOCK ALL HER ATTACKS.
KR
IF THIS DRAGS OUT, I'M **DOOMED.**
BUT I CAN'T RUN AWAY!!
FFT FT
GON IS AT HIS WITS' END!! HE'S BARELY HANGING ON, WAITING FOR PITOU.
I CAN'T LET HIM SEE PALM!
EVEN IF THERE'S A SHRED OF HER PSYCHE LEFT...
...RIGHT NOW IT CAN ONLY HURT GON!!

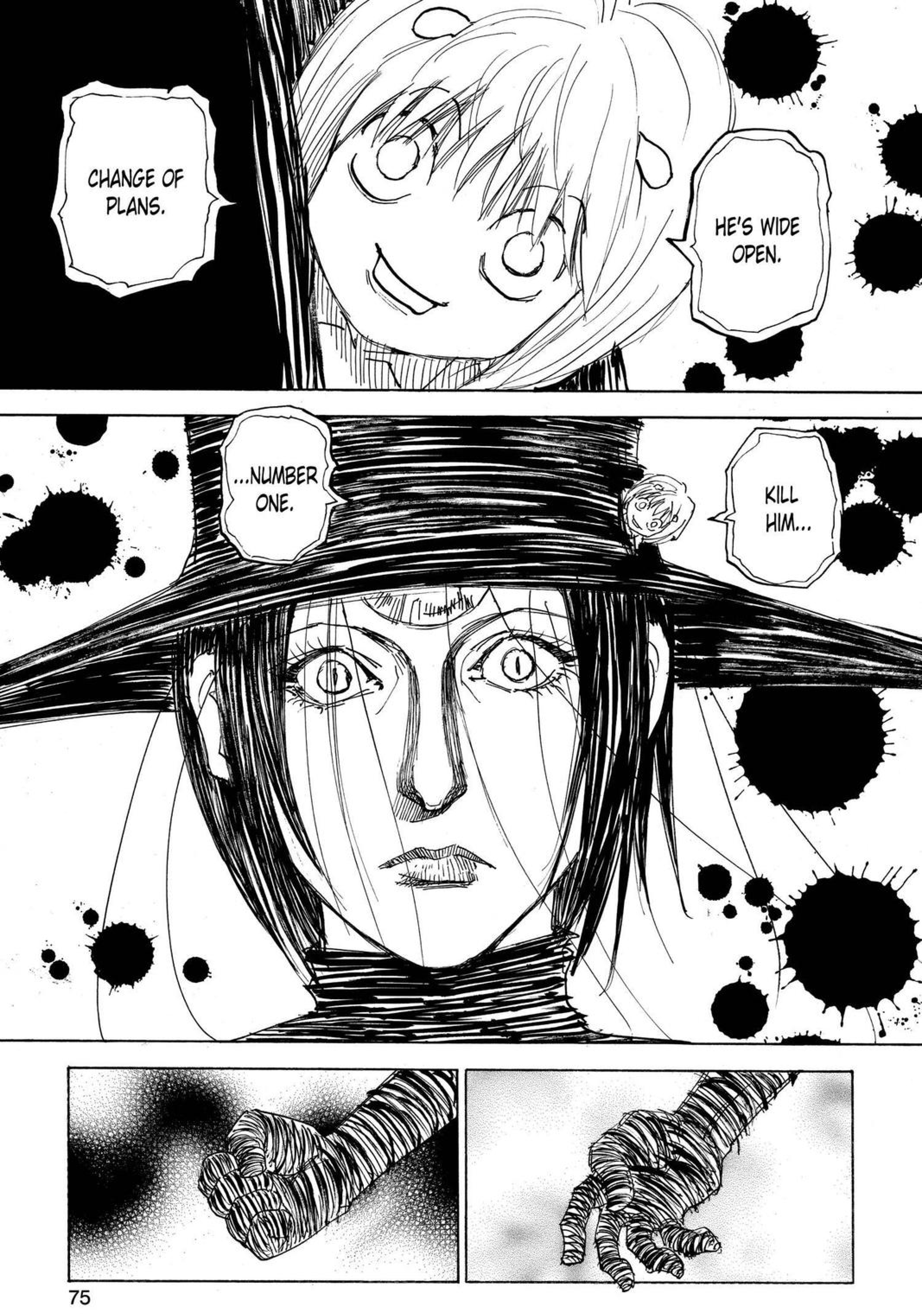

HSSH
PALM!! WHY ARE YOU LOOKING FOR GON?
IF YOU HAVE A GOOD REASON, I'LL TELL YOU WHERE HE IS!
HSSH
HSSH
HSSH
YOU'RE ASKING *NOW?*
THERE'S NO REASON. I JUST WANT TO SEE HIM.
HE'S CLOSE BY, ISN'T HE? I CAN LOOK FOR HIM MYSELF...
TM
TM
...AFTER I KILL YOU!!
FFT
BAM
SHHK
WHAM

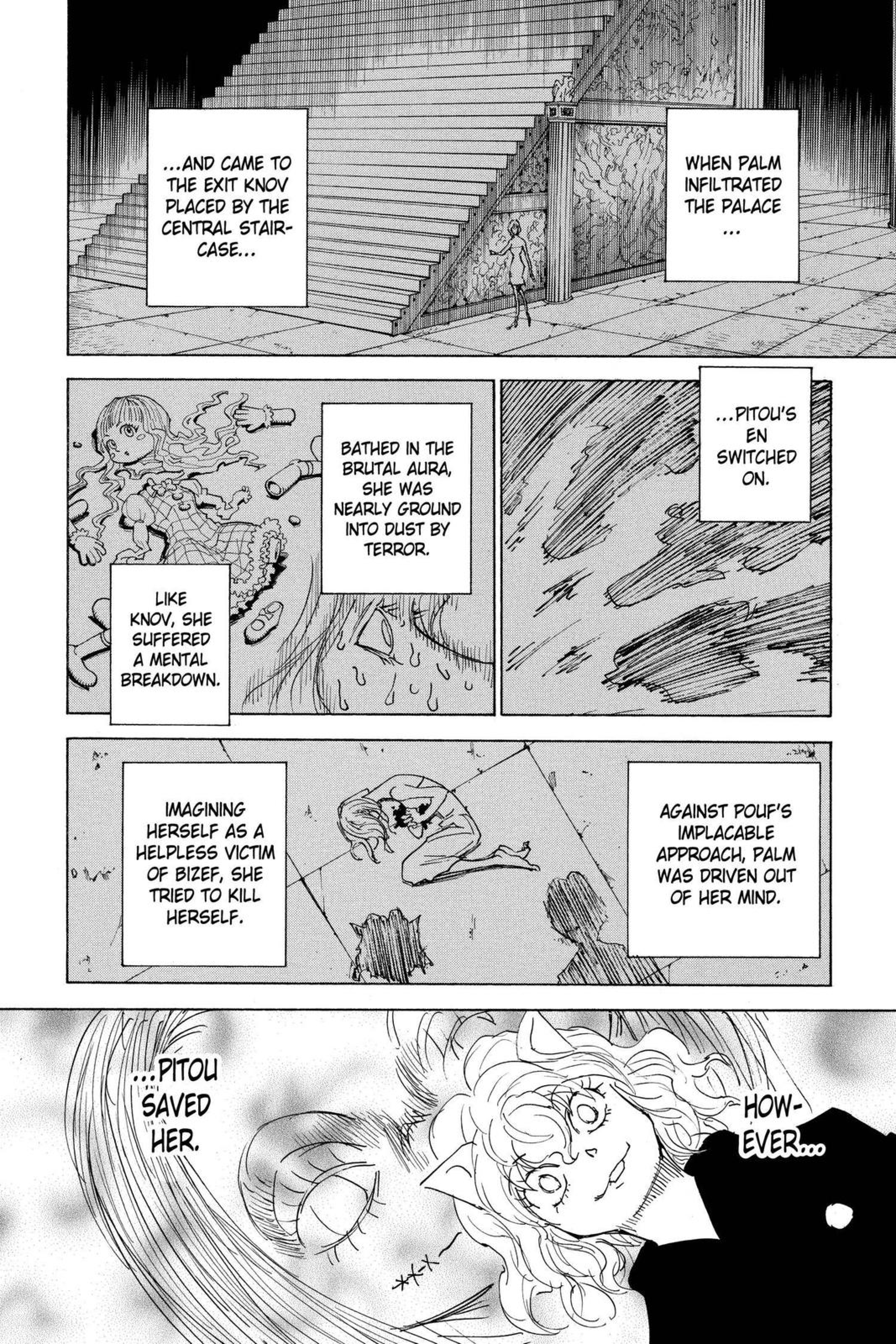

I'M SORRY!! I GOT STRESSED OUT AND CALLED YOU THE ENEMY...
...BUT YOU'RE STILL PALM, NO MATTER WHAT YOU LOOK LIKE!
GON'S SUFFERING RIGHT NOW!!
SOMEONE WHO MEANT A LOT TO HIM WAS RUTHLESSLY ALTERED!!
EVEN HIS *MIND* WAS CHANGED.
AS WE SPEAK, GON'S FACING OFF AGAINST THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE!!
IF YOU SHOW UP WITHOUT WARNING, LOOKING LIKE THAT...
...HE WON'T BE ABLE TO HOLD IT TOGETHER.
SO YOU HAVE TO PROMISE...
...TO CALL HIM BY NAME FIRST!!

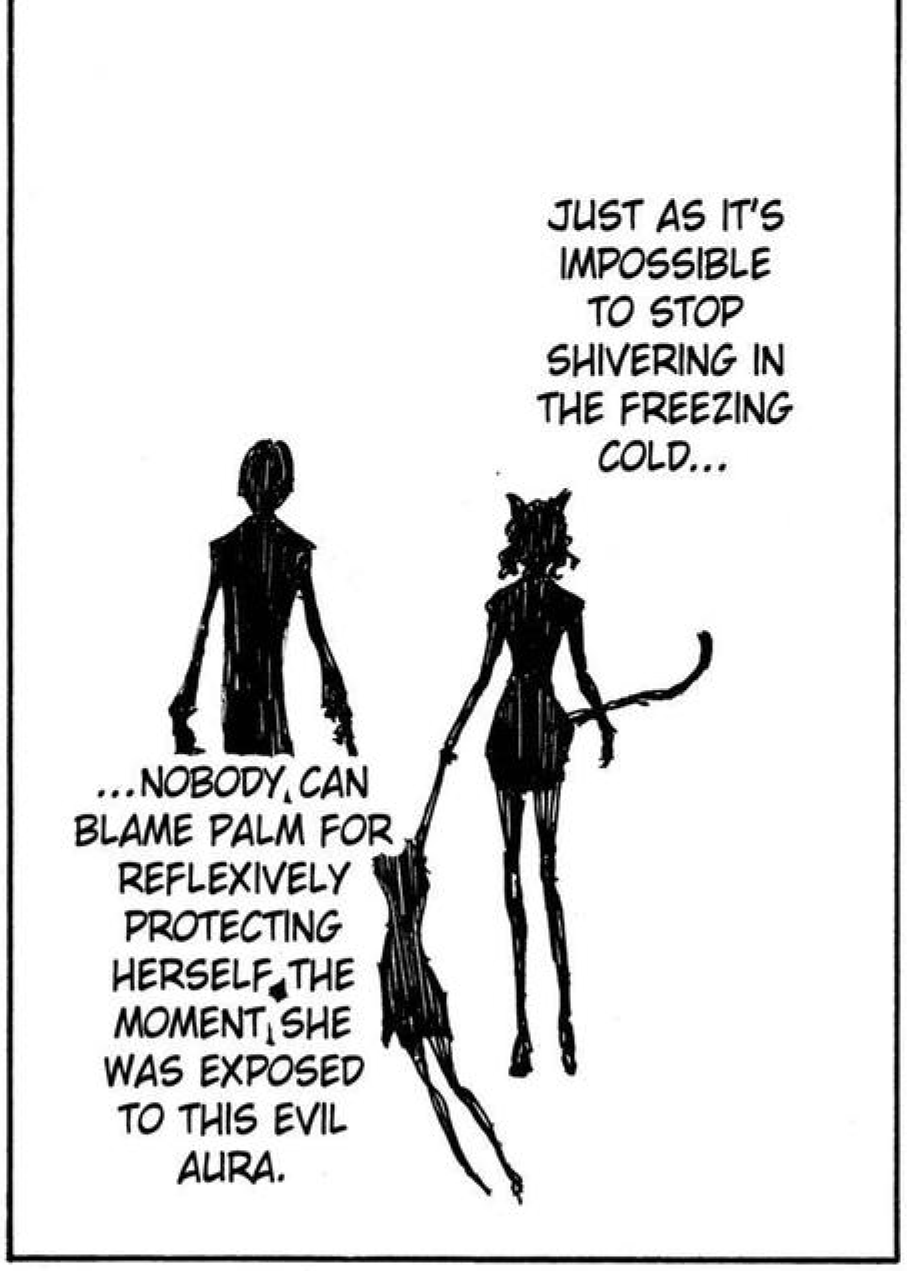

THAT'S MY ONE CONDITION!
LET HIM KNOW...
...YOU'RE OKAY.
HE WAS SO WORRIED ABOUT YOU...
...UP TO THE MINUTE WE CAME IN HERE.
GIVE HIM...
...SOME PEACE OF MIND.
KILLUA SAID THOSE WORDS TO BUY TIME.
HE HAD NO INTENTION OF TAKING HER TO GON.


AT LEAST, NOT AT FIRST...
PLEASE.
PUT HIS MIND AT EASE.
ONLY YOU, PALM...
...CAN DO THAT NOW.
NOBODY ELSE...
...CAN REACH HIM.
NOT ME...


I CAN'T HELP HIM ANYMORE!!
AH...
WAAAAHH
WHEN HE PUT IT INTO WORDS...
...HIS WELLED-UP EMOTIONS POURED OUT...
...LIKE A BURST DAM.

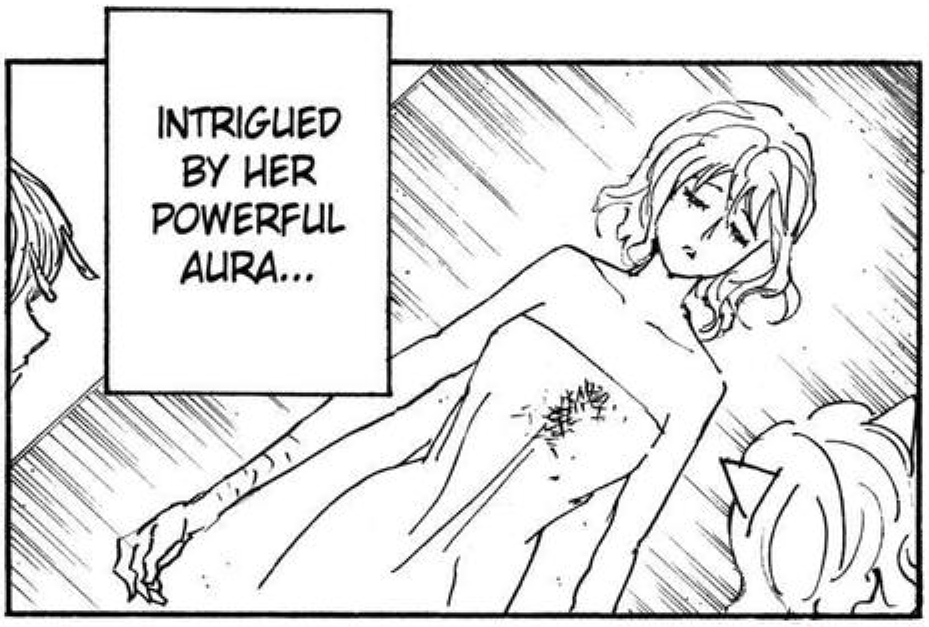

HE'S WIDE OPEN.
CHANGE OF PLANS.
KILL HIM...
...NUMBER ONE.


WHEN PALM INFILTRATED THE PALACE...
...AND CAME TO THE EXIT KNOV PLACED BY THE CENTRAL STAIRCASE...
...PITOU'S EN SWITCHED ON.
BATHED IN THE BRUTAL AURA, SHE WAS NEARLY GROUND INTO DUST BY TERROR.
LIKE KNOV, SHE SUFFERED A MENTAL BREAKDOWN.
AGAINST POUF'S IMPLACABLE APPROACH, PALM WAS DRIVEN OUT OF HER MIND.
IMAGINING HERSELF AS A HELPLESS VICTIM OF BIZEF, SHE TRIED TO KILL HERSELF.
HOWEVER...
...PITOU SAVED HER.

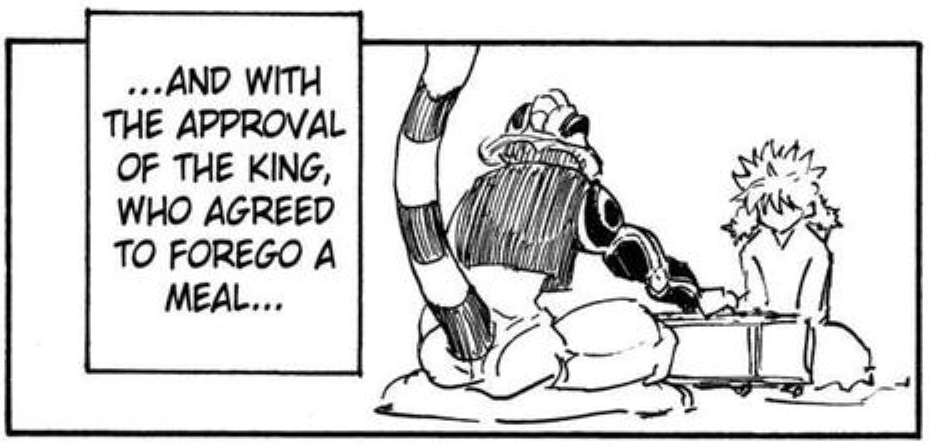


JUST AS IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO STOP SHIVERING IN THE FREEZING COLD...

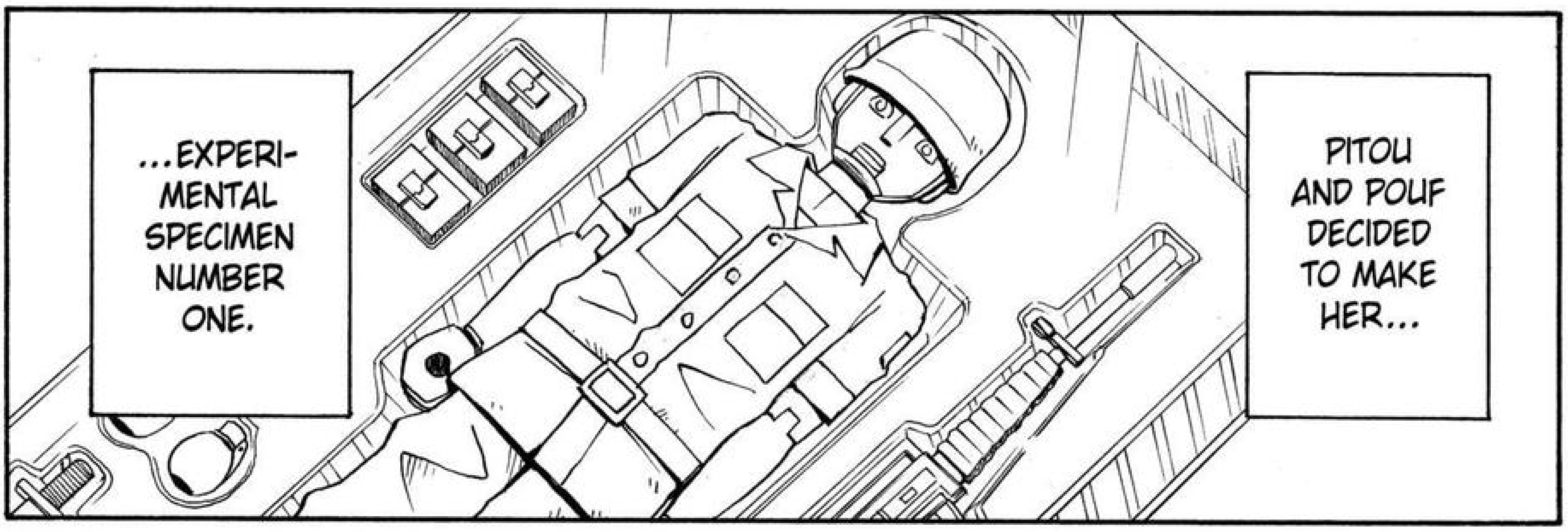
...NOBODY CAN BLAME PALM FOR REFLEXIVELY PROTECTING HERSELF THE MOMENT SHE WAS EXPOSED TO THIS EVIL AURA.



INTRIGUED BY HER POWERFUL AURA...

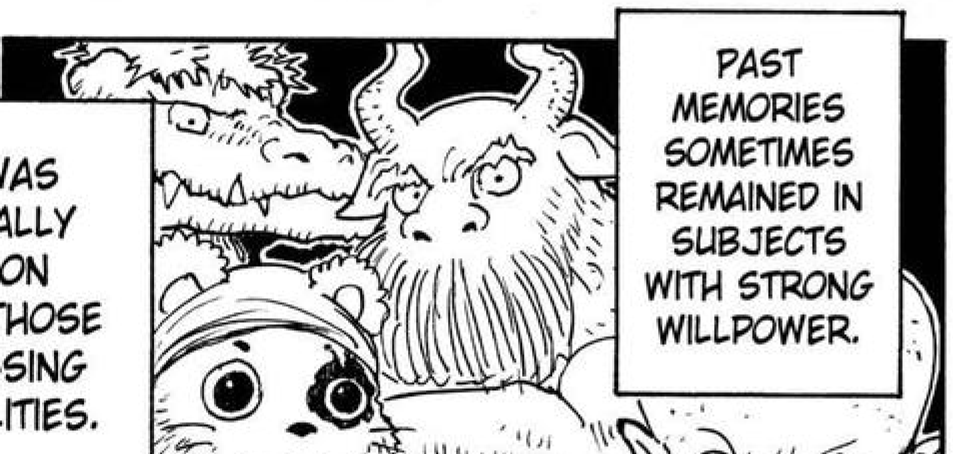


...AND WITH THE APPROVAL OF THE KING, WHO AGREED TO FOREGO A MEAL...



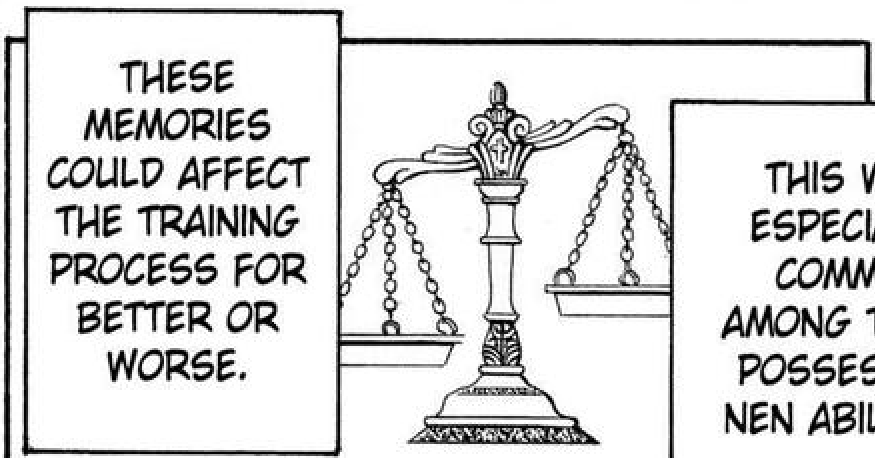
PITOU AND POUF DECIDED TO MAKE HER...

...EXPERIMENTAL SPECIMEN NUMBER ONE.

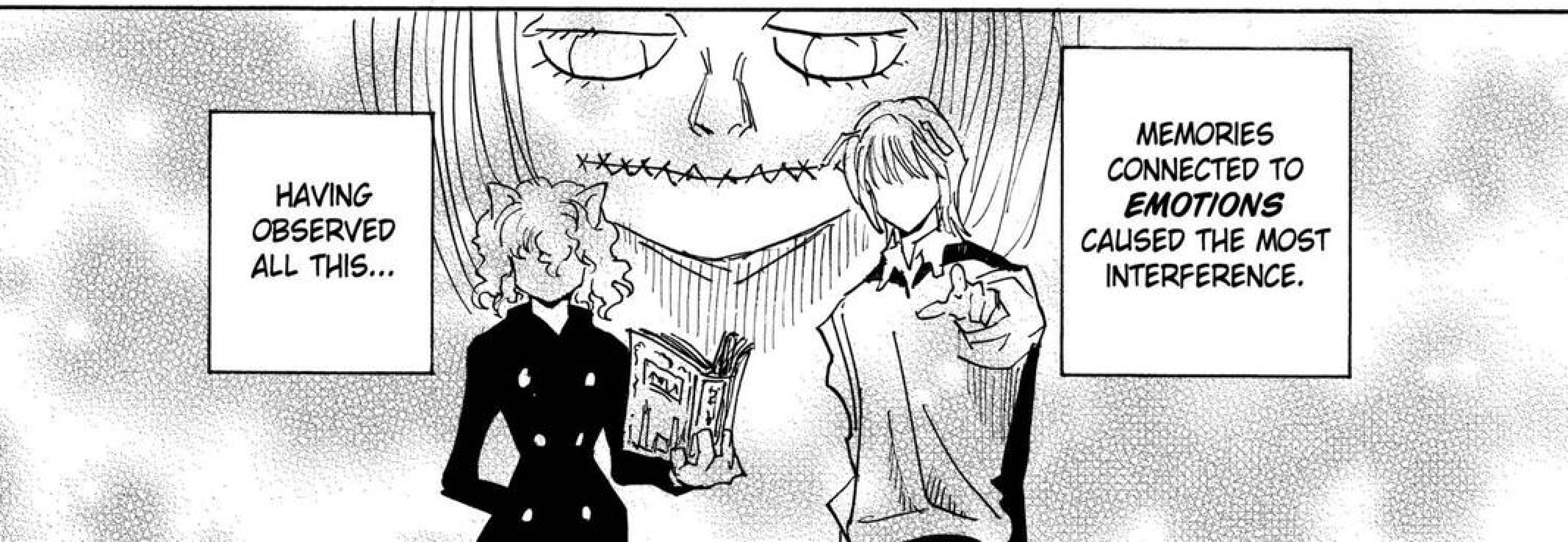


PAST MEMORIES SOMETIMES REMAINED IN SUBJECTS WITH STRONG WILLPOWER.

THIS WAS ESPECIALLY COMMON AMONG THOSE POSSESSING NEN ABILITIES.

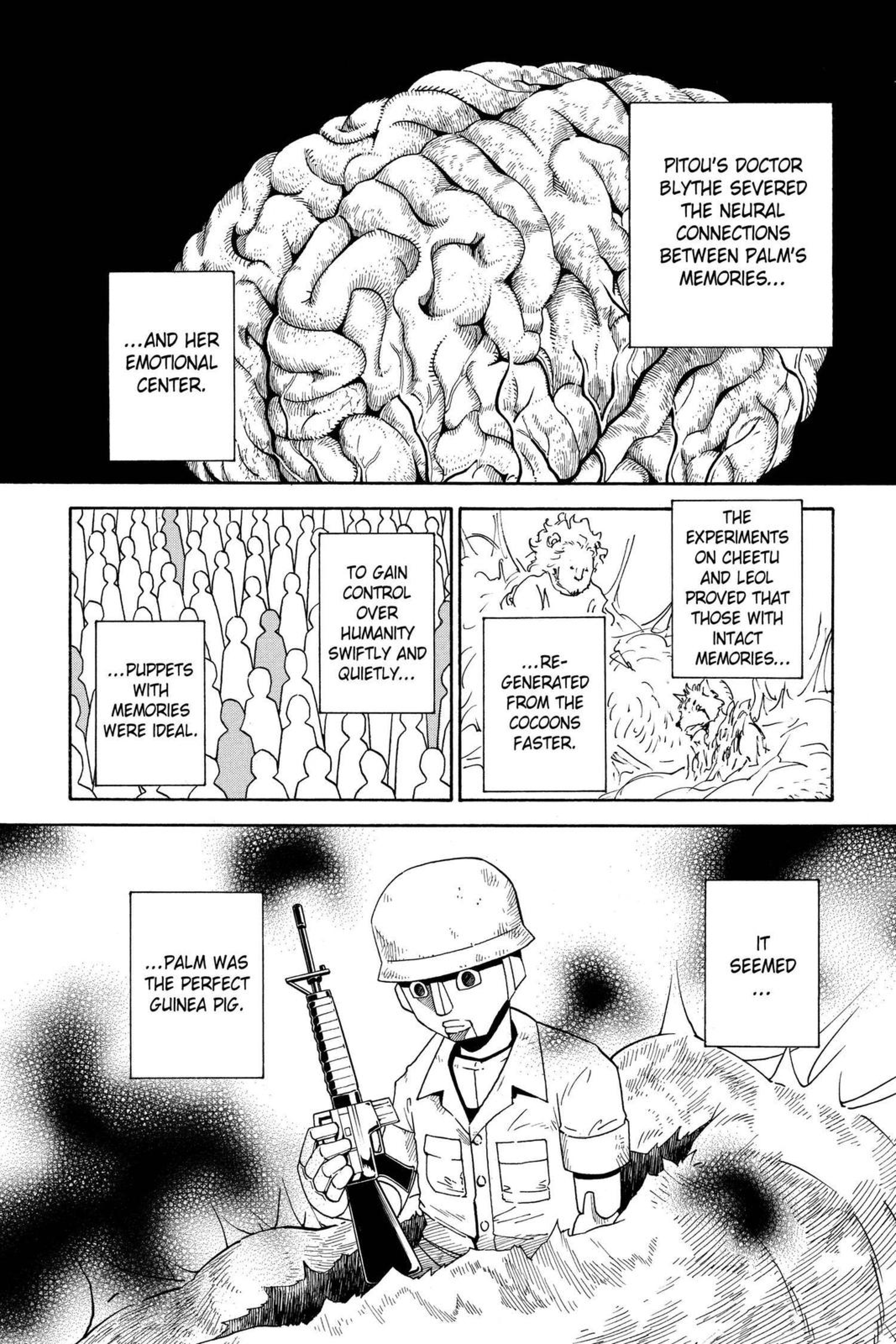


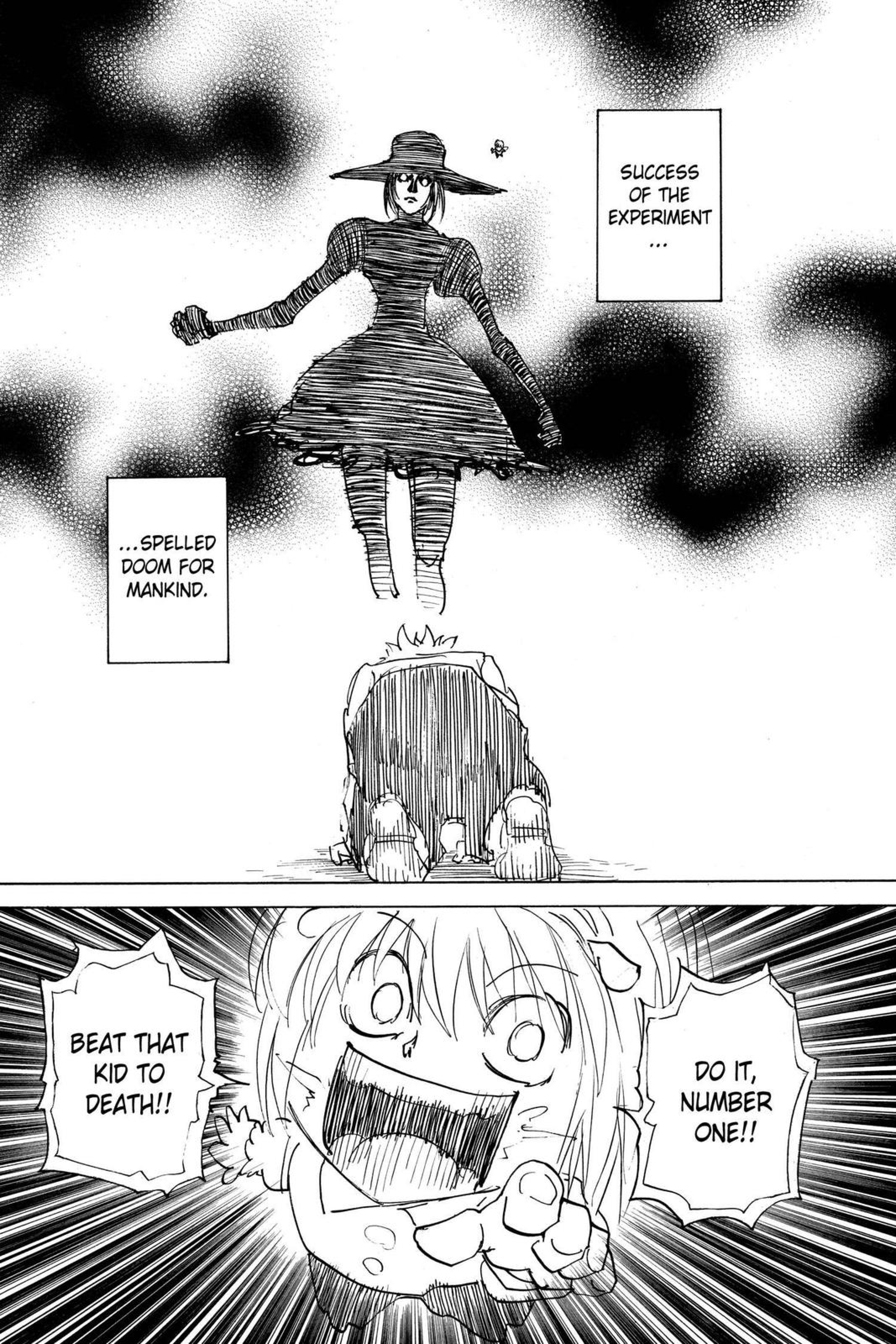
THESE MEMORIES COULD AFFECT THE TRAINING PROCESS FOR BETTER OR WORSE.

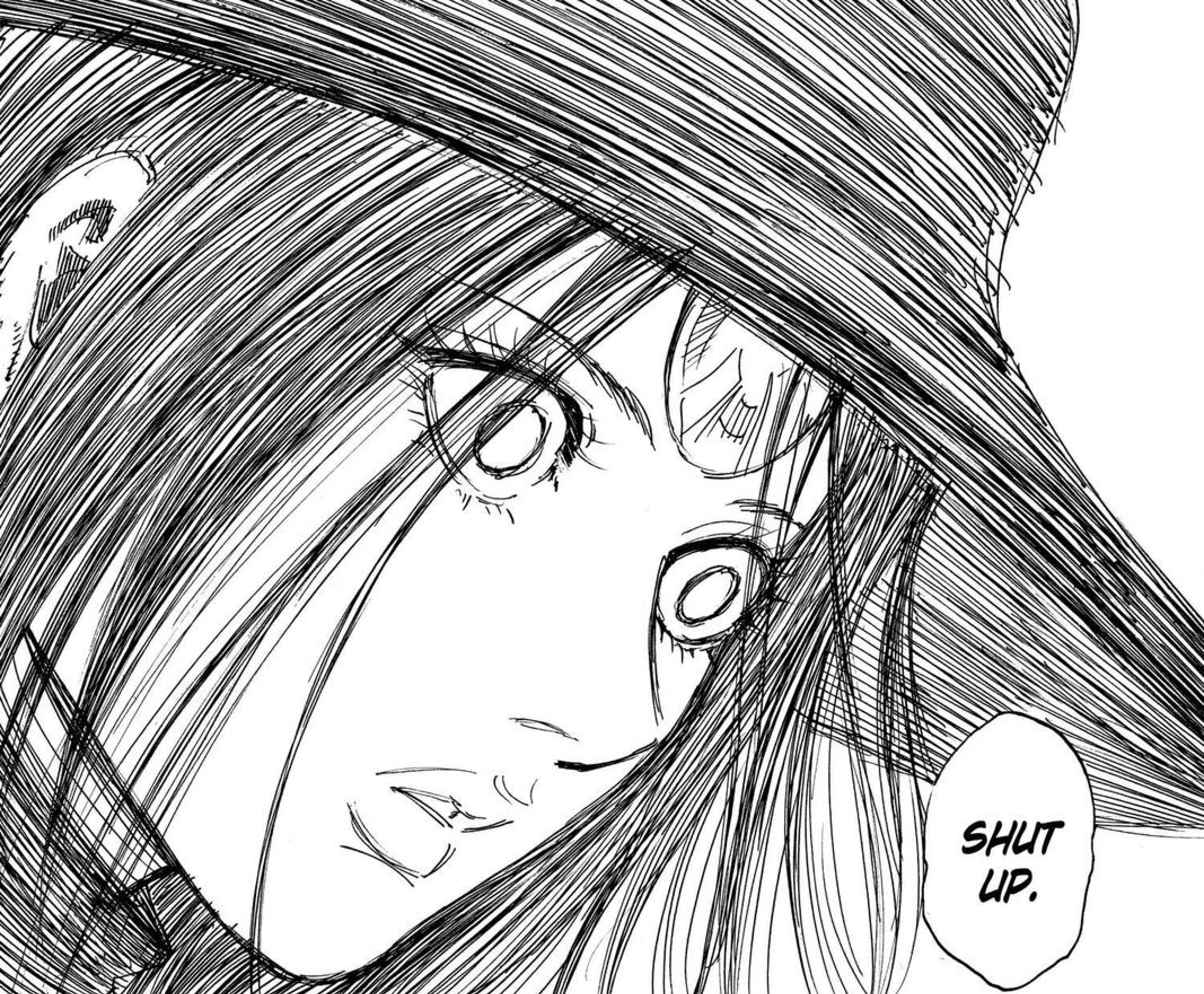


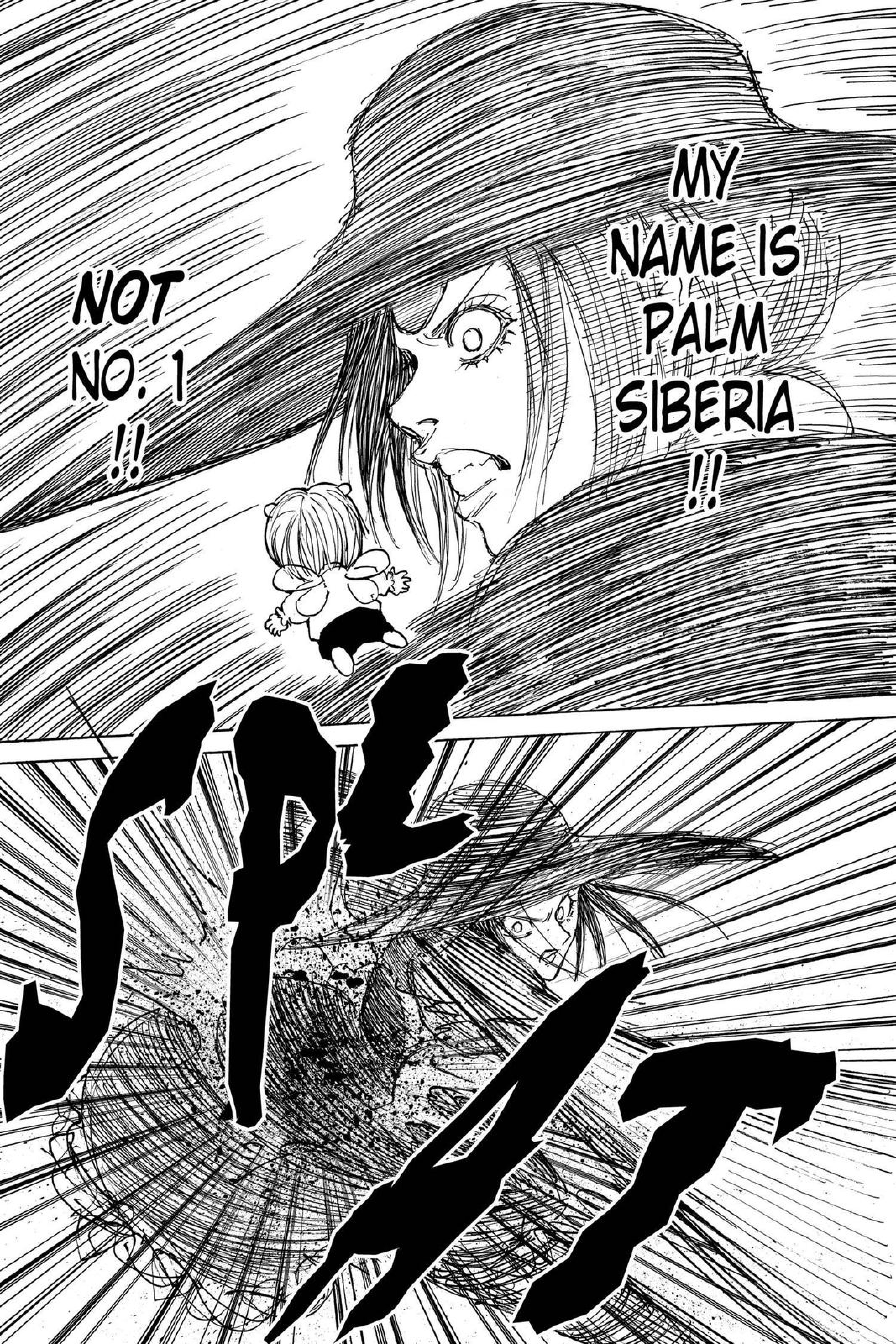
MEMORIES CONNECTED TO ***EMOTIONS*** CAUSED THE MOST INTERFERENCE.

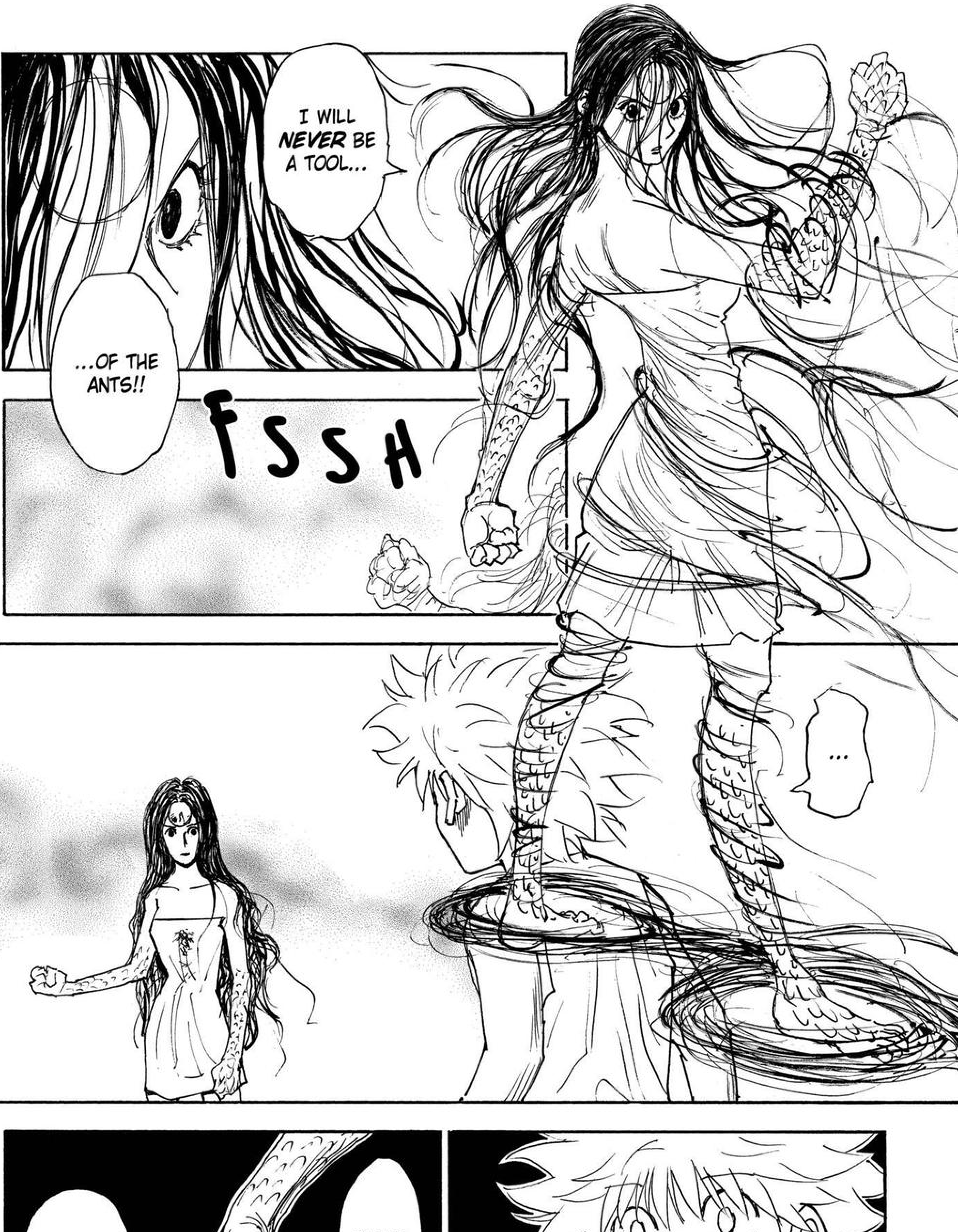
HAVING OBSERVED ALL THIS...

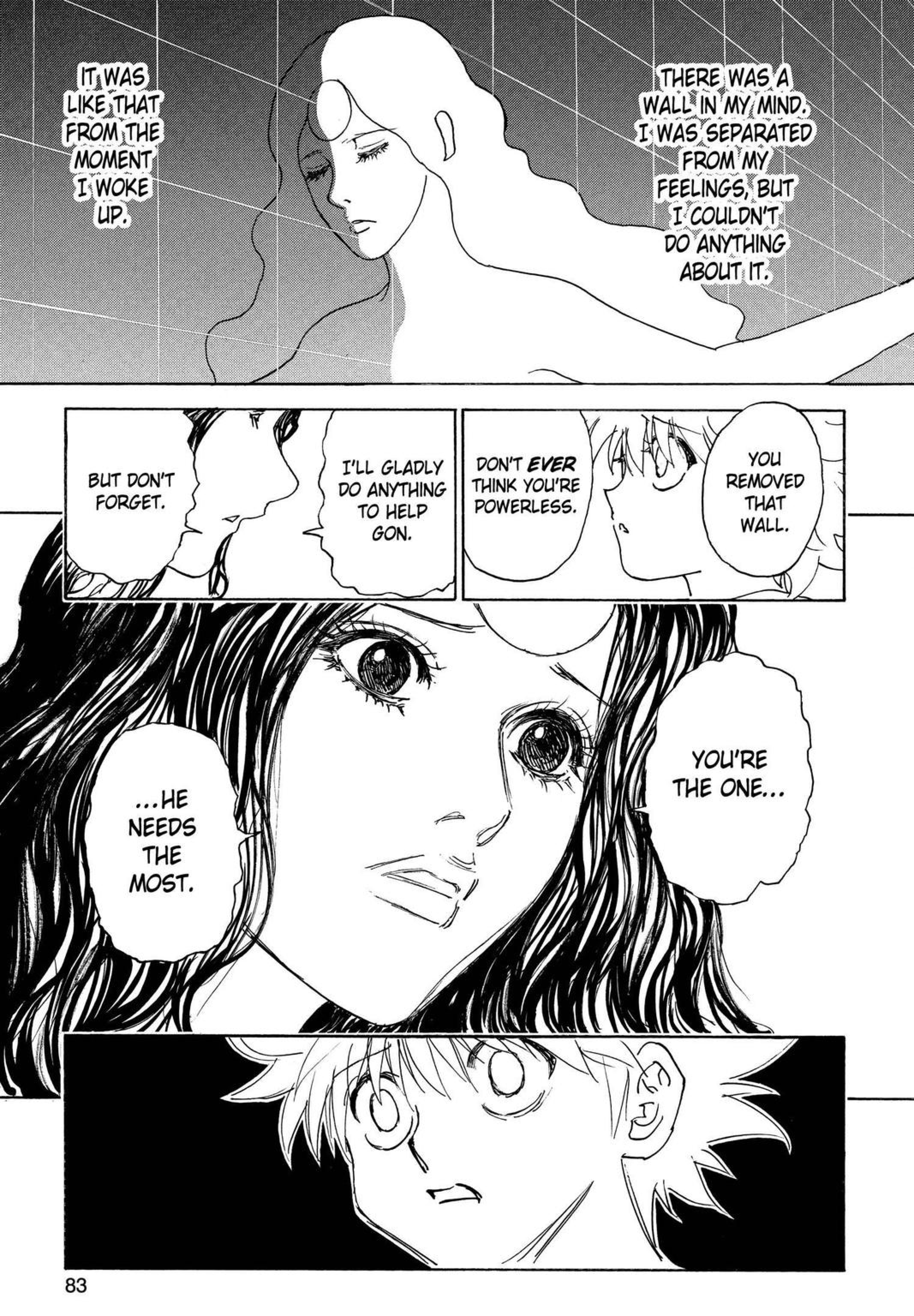

PITOU'S DOCTOR BLYTHE SEVERED THE NEURAL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PALM'S MEMORIES...
...AND HER EMOTIONAL CENTER.
THE EXPERIMENTS ON CHEETU AND LEOL PROVED THAT THOSE WITH INTACT MEMORIES...
...REGENERATED FROM THE COCOONS FASTER.
TO GAIN CONTROL OVER HUMANITY SWIFTLY AND QUIETLY...
...PUPPETS WITH MEMORIES WERE IDEAL.
IT SEEMED ...
...PALM WAS THE PERFECT GUINEA PIG.

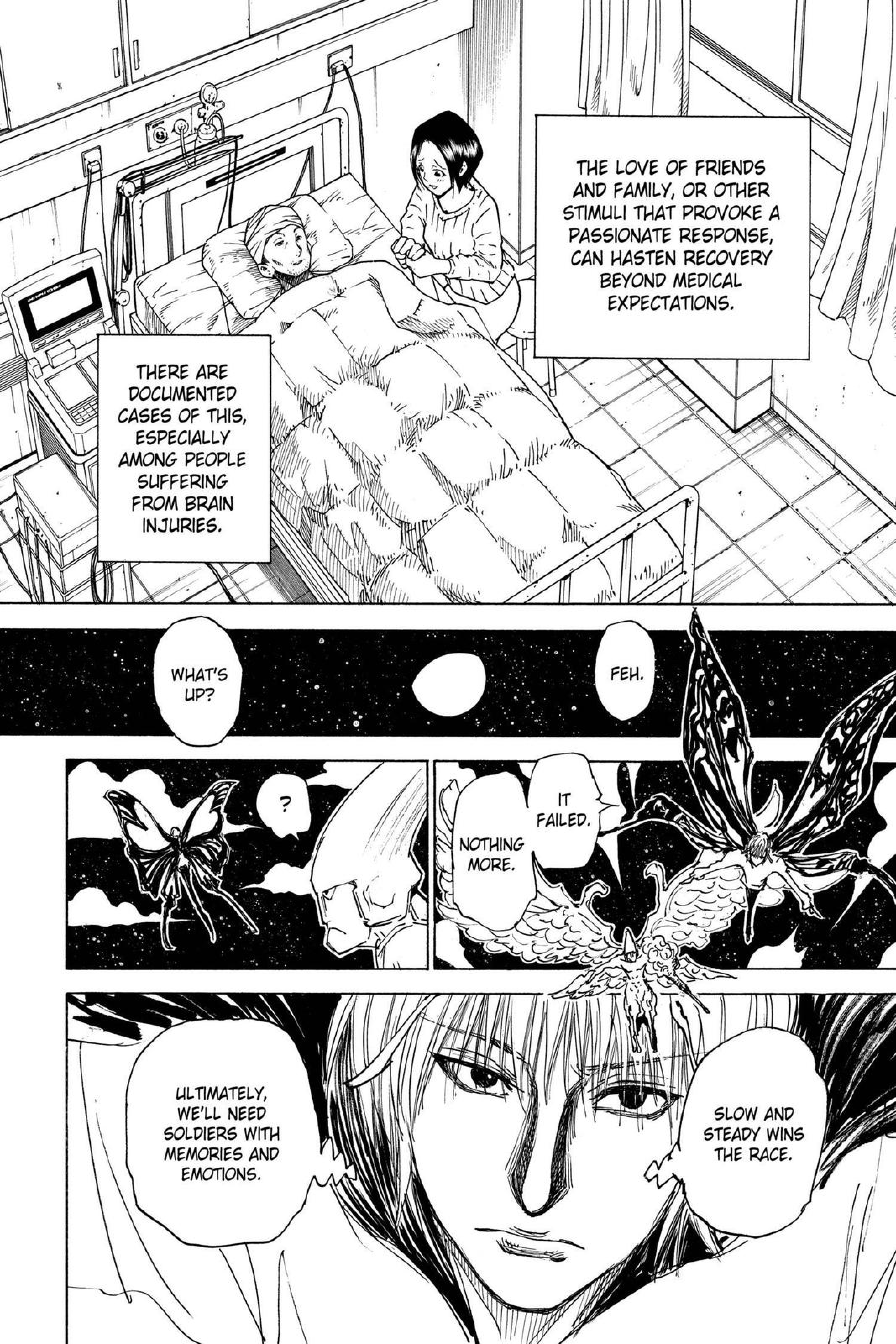

SUCCESS OF THE EXPERIMENT ...
...SPELLED DOOM FOR MANKIND.
DO IT, NUMBER ONE!!
BEAT THAT KID TO DEATH!!

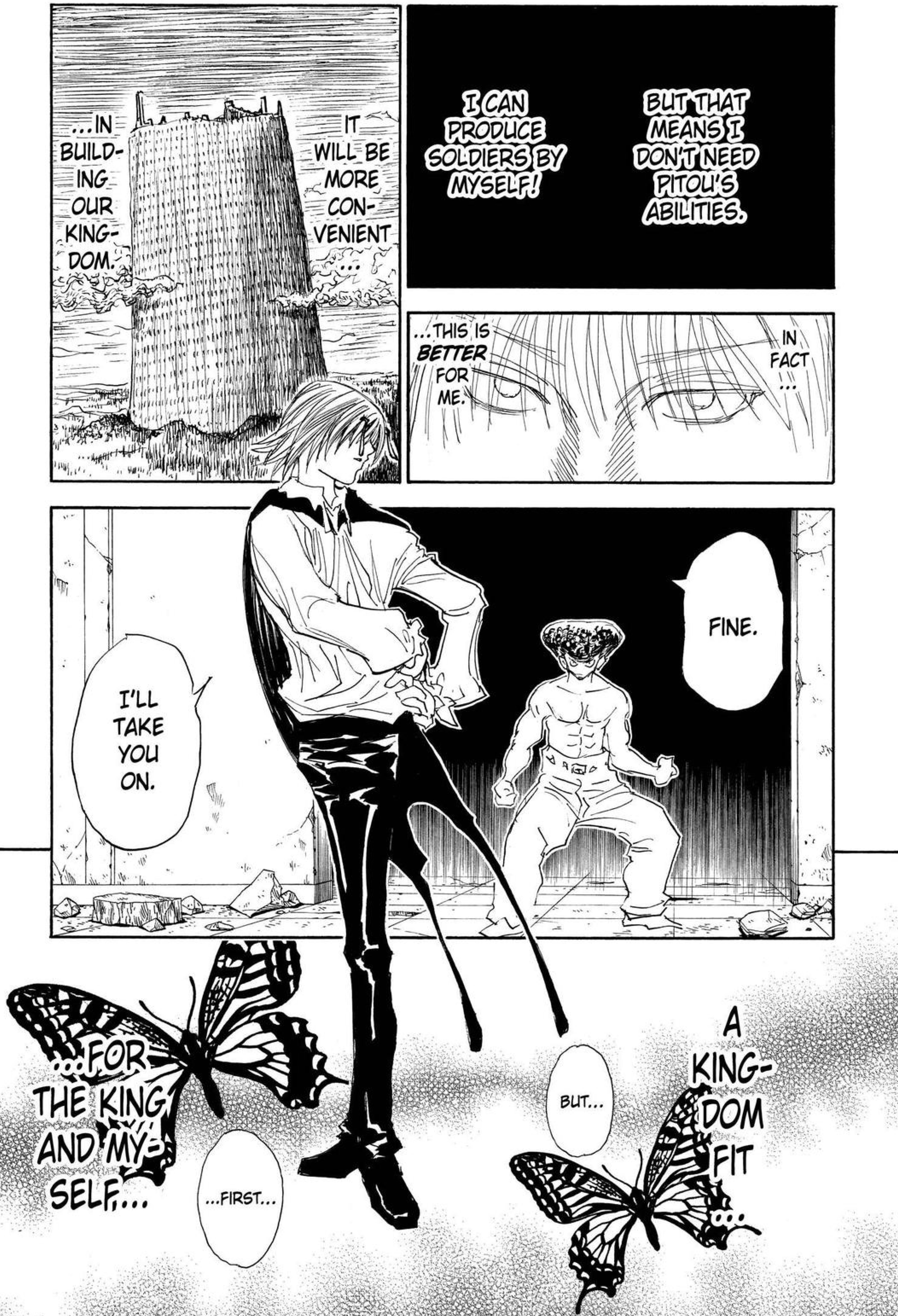

SHUT UP.


MY NAME IS PALM SIBERIA !!
NOT NO. 1 !!
SPLAT

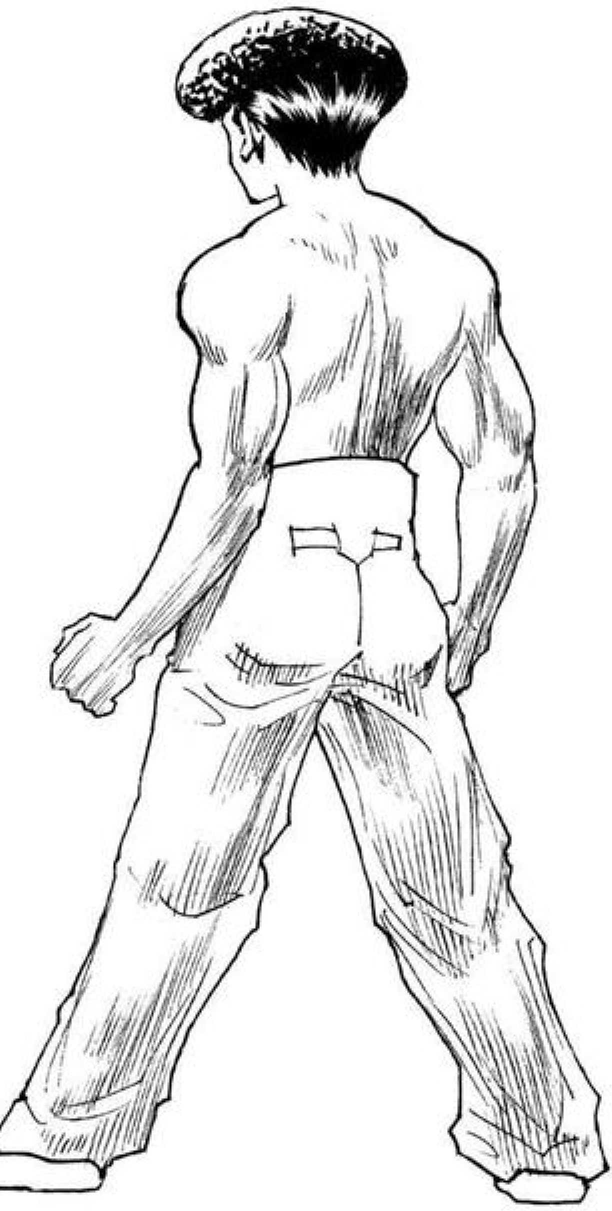

I WILL **NEVER** BE A TOOL...
...OF THE ANTS!!
FSSH
...
KILLUA.
I OWE IT TO YOU.

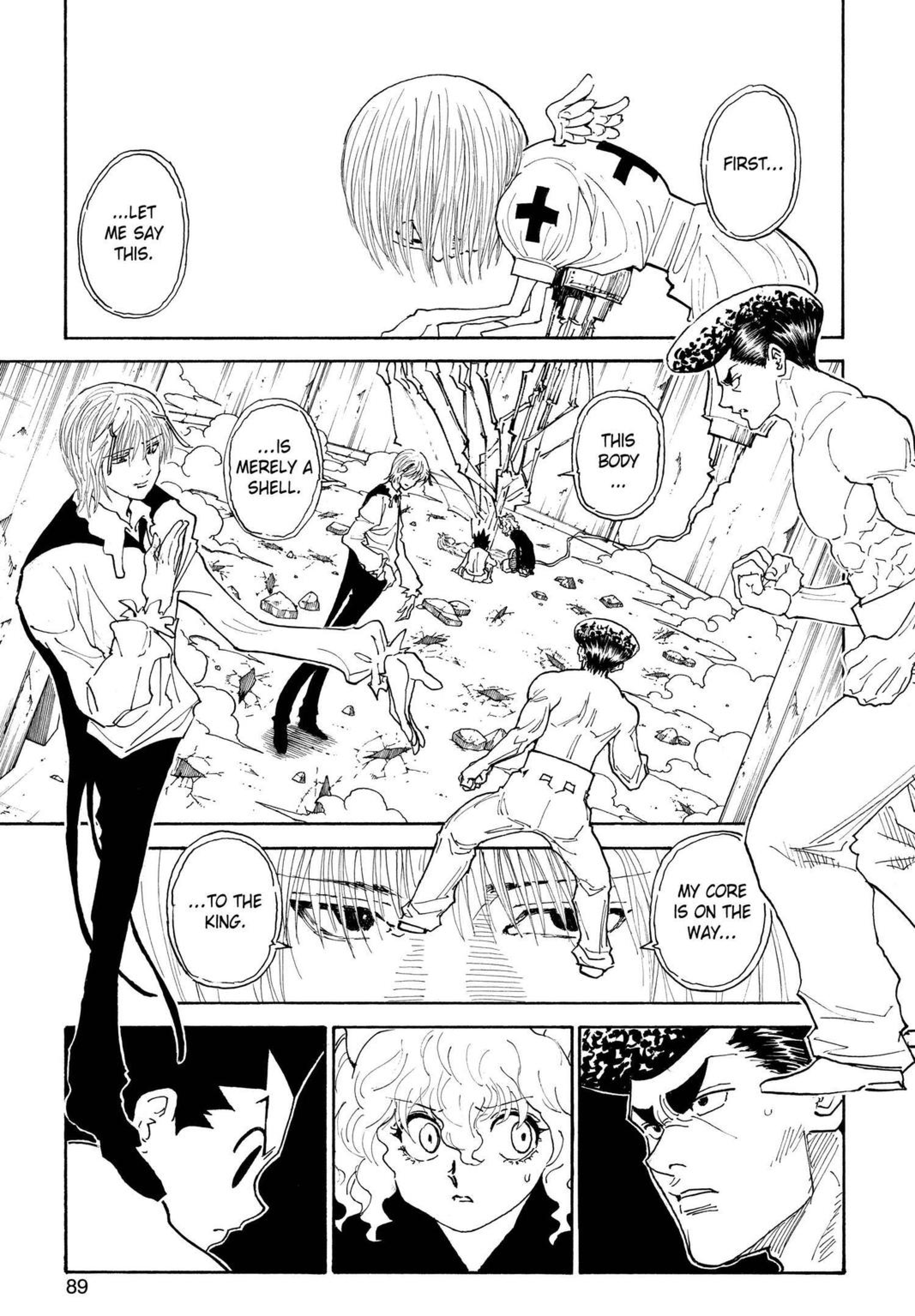

THERE WAS A WALL IN MY MIND. I WAS SEPARATED FROM MY FEELINGS, BUT I COULDN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT.
IT WAS LIKE THAT FROM THE MOMENT I WOKE UP.
YOU REMOVED THAT WALL.
DON'T **EVER** THINK YOU'RE POWERLESS.
I'LL GLADLY DO ANYTHING TO HELP GON.
BUT DON'T FORGET.
YOU'RE THE ONE...
...HE NEEDS THE MOST.

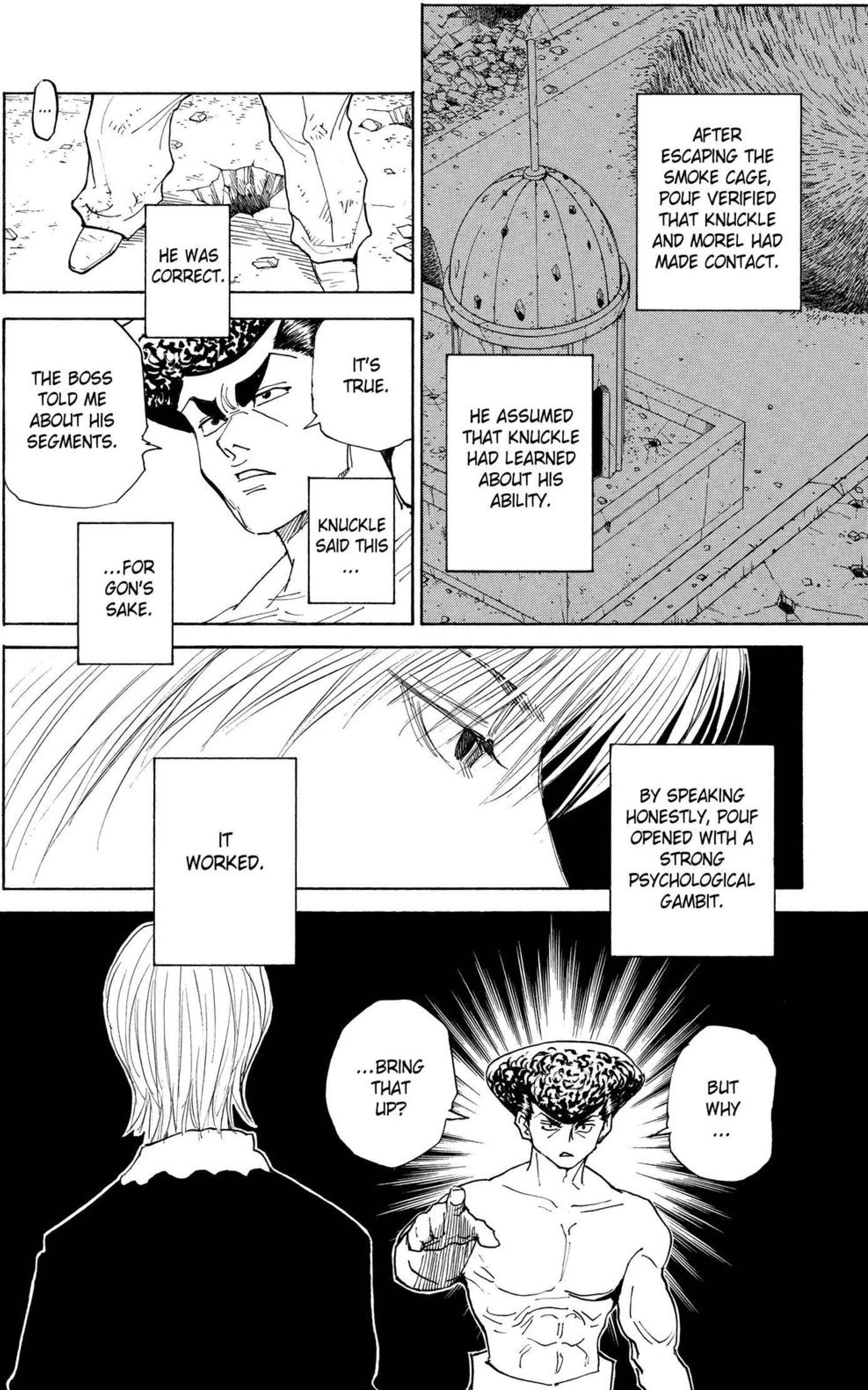

THE LOVE OF FRIENDS AND FAMILY, OR OTHER STIMULI THAT PROVOKE A PASSIONATE RESPONSE, CAN HASTEN RECOVERY BEYOND MEDICAL EXPECTATIONS.
THERE ARE DOCUMENTED CASES OF THIS, ESPECIALLY AMONG PEOPLE SUFFERING FROM BRAIN INJURIES.
FEH.
WHAT'S UP?
IT FAILED.
NOTHING MORE.
?
SLOW AND STEADY WINS THE RACE.
ULTIMATELY, WE'LL NEED SOLDIERS WITH MEMORIES AND EMOTIONS.

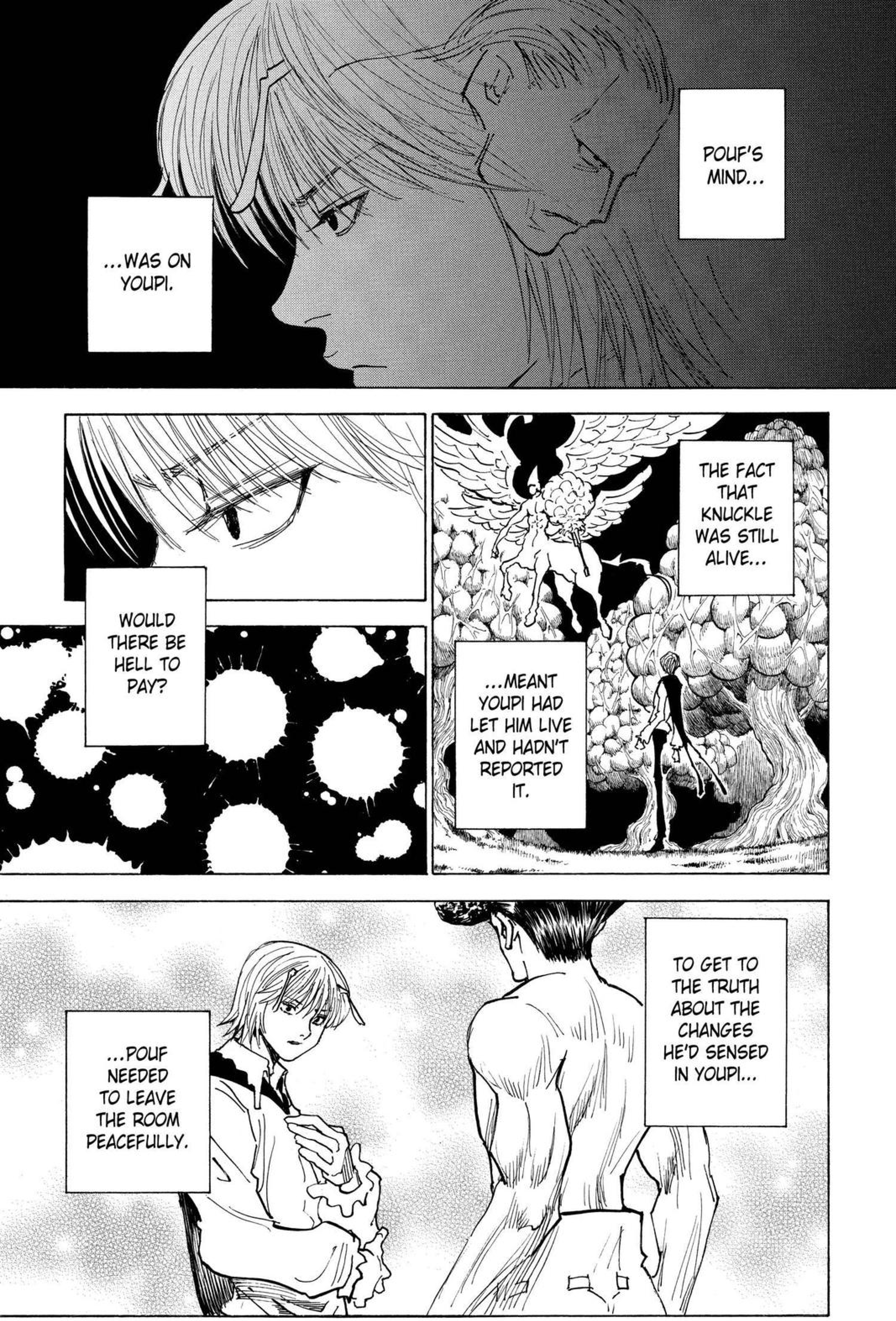

BUT THAT MEANS I DON'T NEED PITOU'S ABILITIES.
I CAN PRODUCE SOLDIERS BY MYSELF!
IN FACT...
...THIS IS BETTER FOR ME.
IT WILL BE MORE CONVENIENT...
...IN BUILDING OUR KINGDOM.
FINE.
I'LL TAKE YOU ON.
A KINGDOM FIT...
BUT...
...FIRST...
...FOR THE KING AND MYSELF...

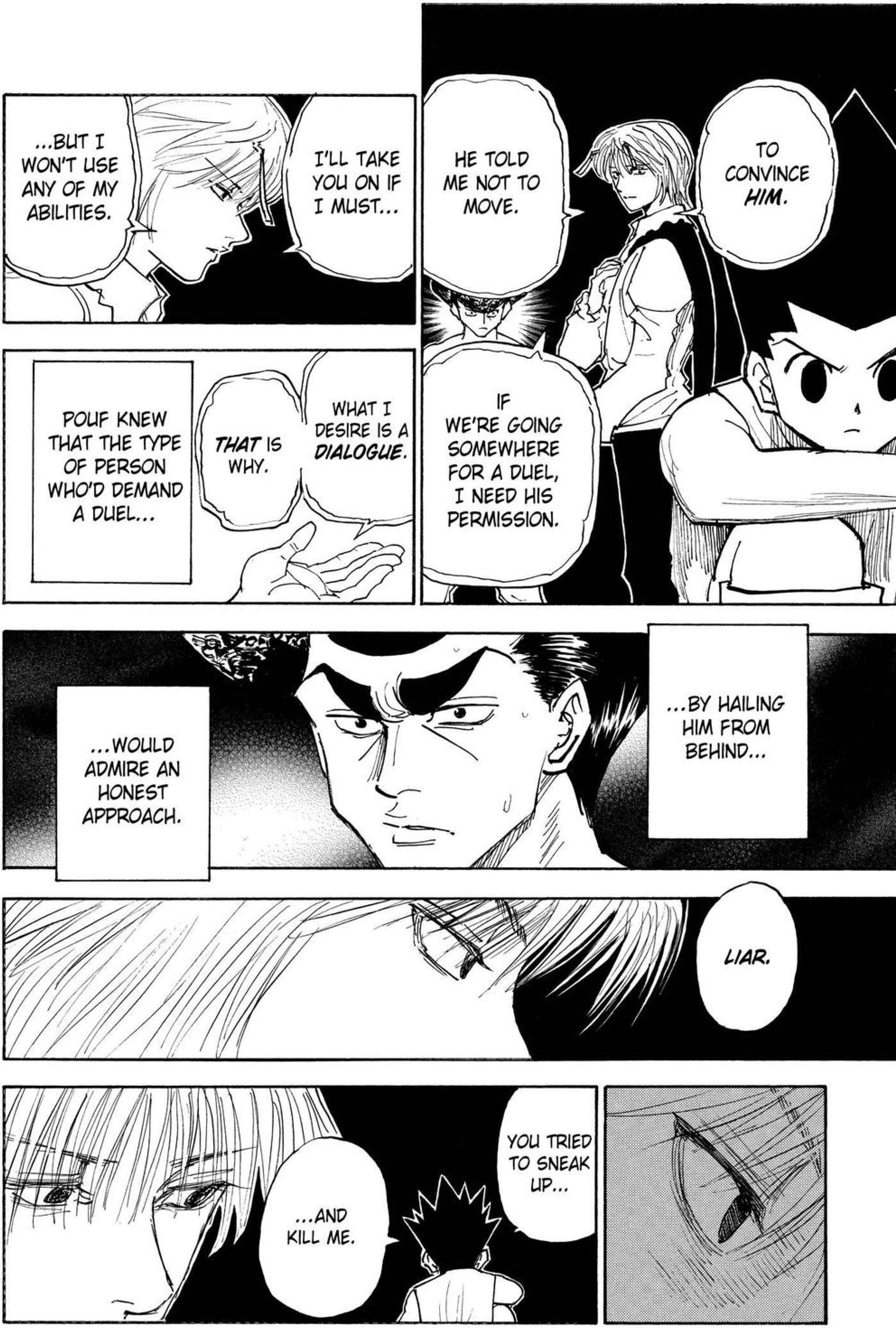
Chapter 295: Determination



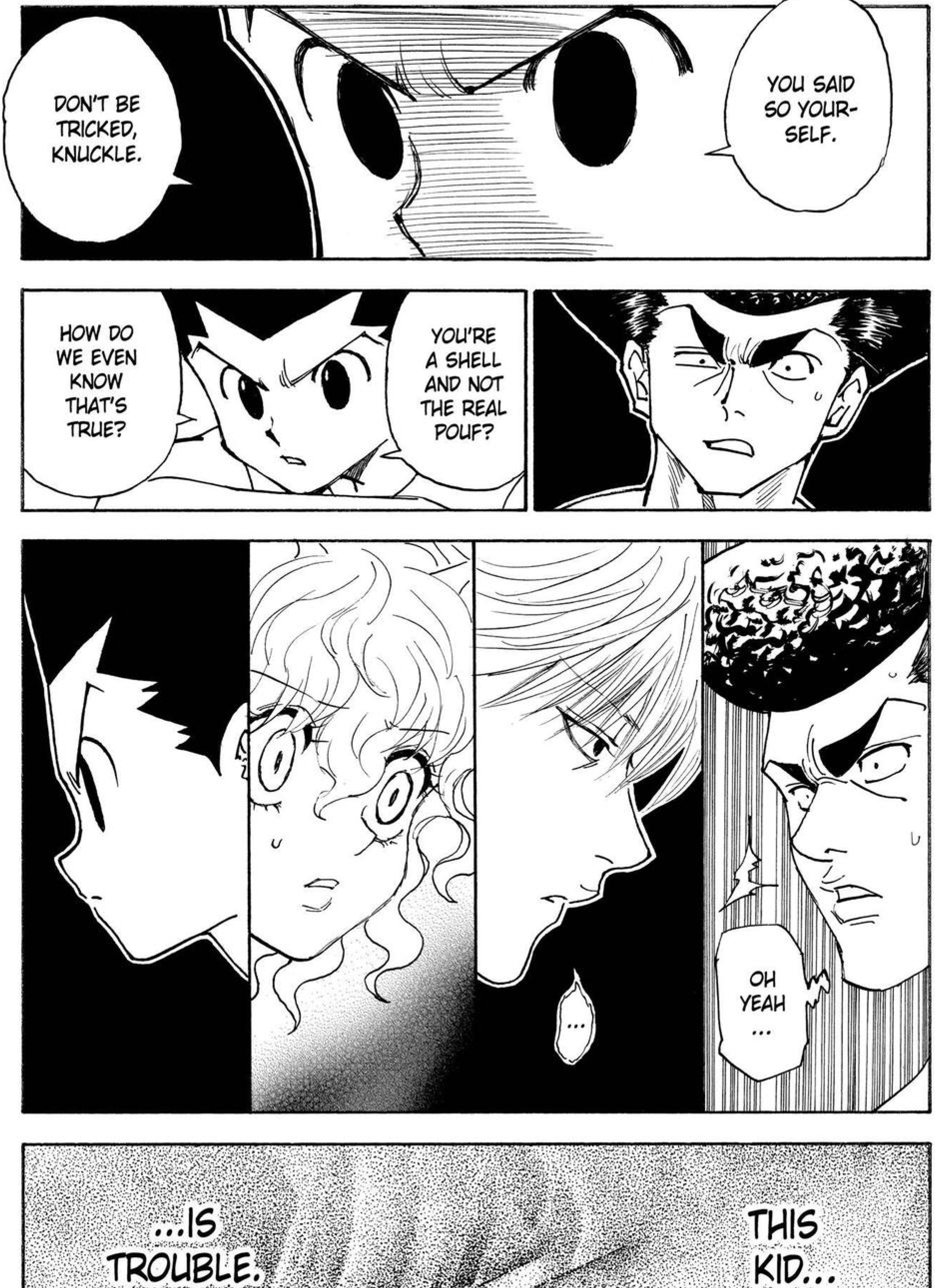

FIRST...
...LET ME SAY THIS.
THIS BODY ...
...IS MERELY A SHELL.
MY CORE IS ON THE WAY...
...TO THE KING.

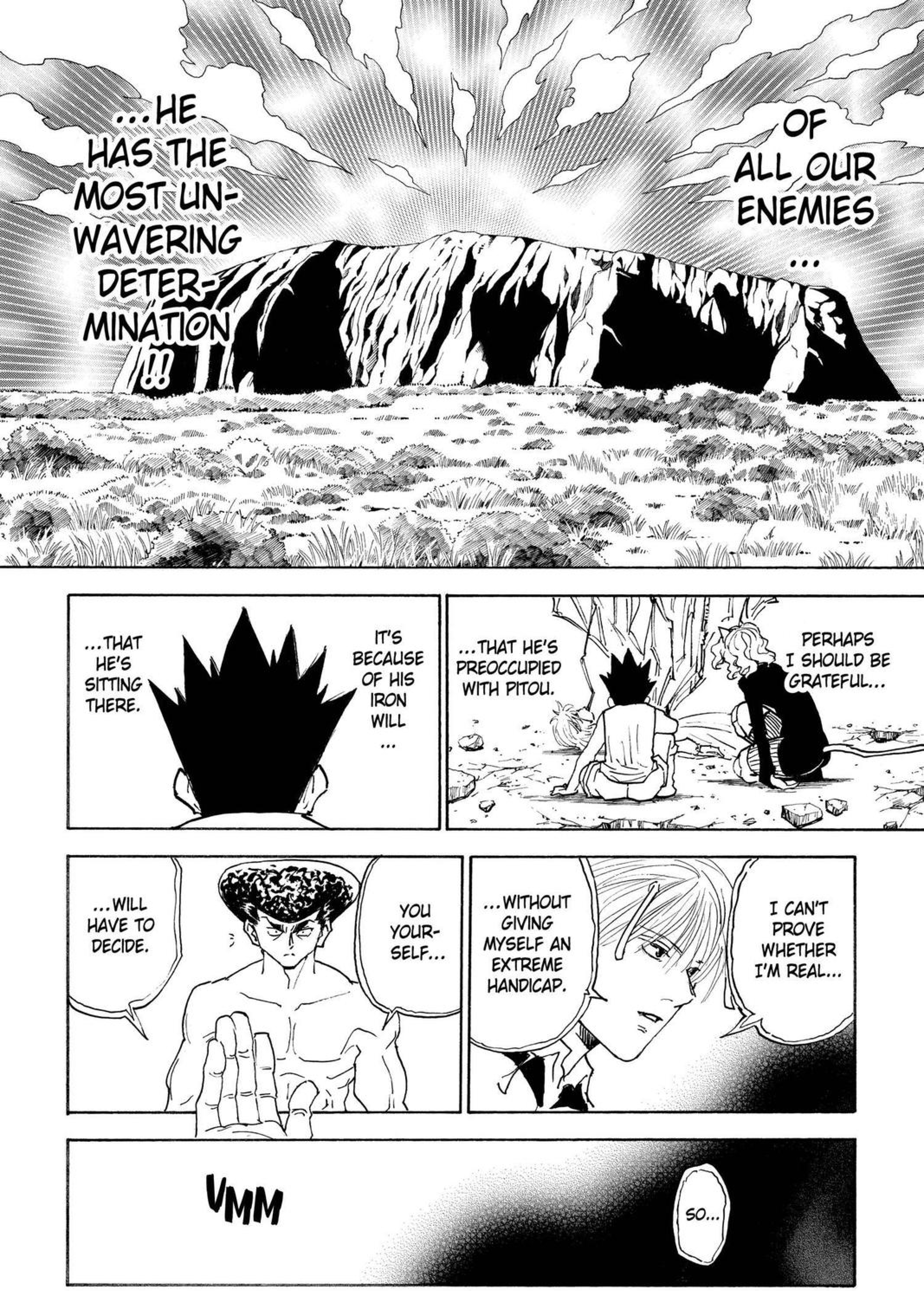

AFTER ESCAPING THE SMOKE CAGE, POUF VERIFIED THAT KNUCKLE AND MOREL HAD MADE CONTACT.
HE ASSUMED THAT KNUCKLE HAD LEARNED ABOUT HIS ABILITY.
...
HE WAS CORRECT.
IT'S TRUE.
THE BOSS TOLD ME ABOUT HIS SEGMENTS.
KNUCKLE SAID THIS ...
...FOR GON'S SAKE.
BY SPEAKING HONESTLY, POUF OPENED WITH A STRONG PSYCHOLOGICAL GAMBIT.
IT WORKED.
BUT WHY ...
...BRING THAT UP?

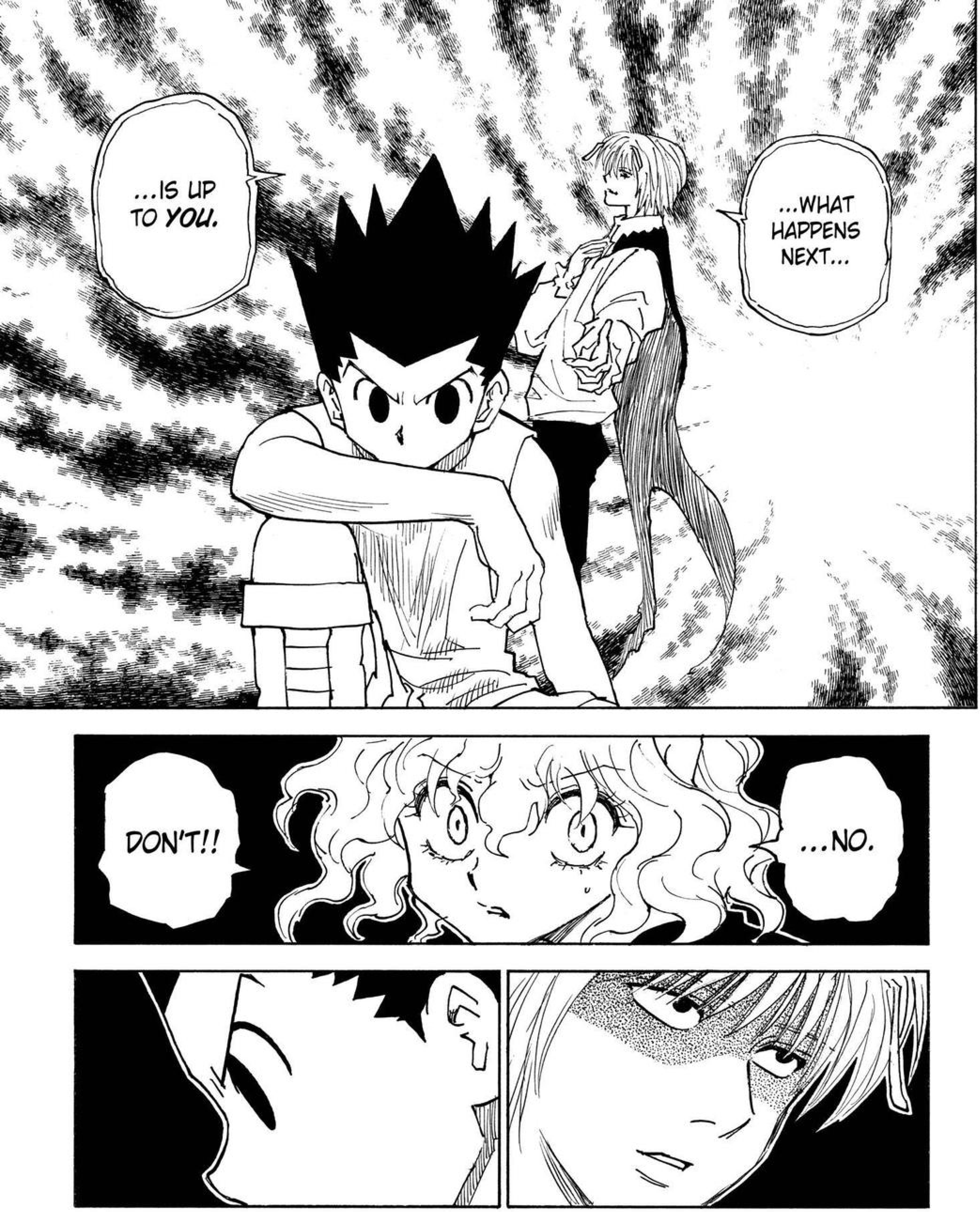

POUF'S MIND...
...WAS ON YOUPI.
THE FACT THAT KNUCKLE WAS STILL ALIVE...
...MEANT YOUPI HAD LET HIM LIVE AND HADN'T REPORTED IT.
WOULD THERE BE HELL TO PAY?
TO GET TO THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CHANGES HE'D SENSED IN YOUPI...
...POUF NEEDED TO LEAVE THE ROOM PEACEFULLY.

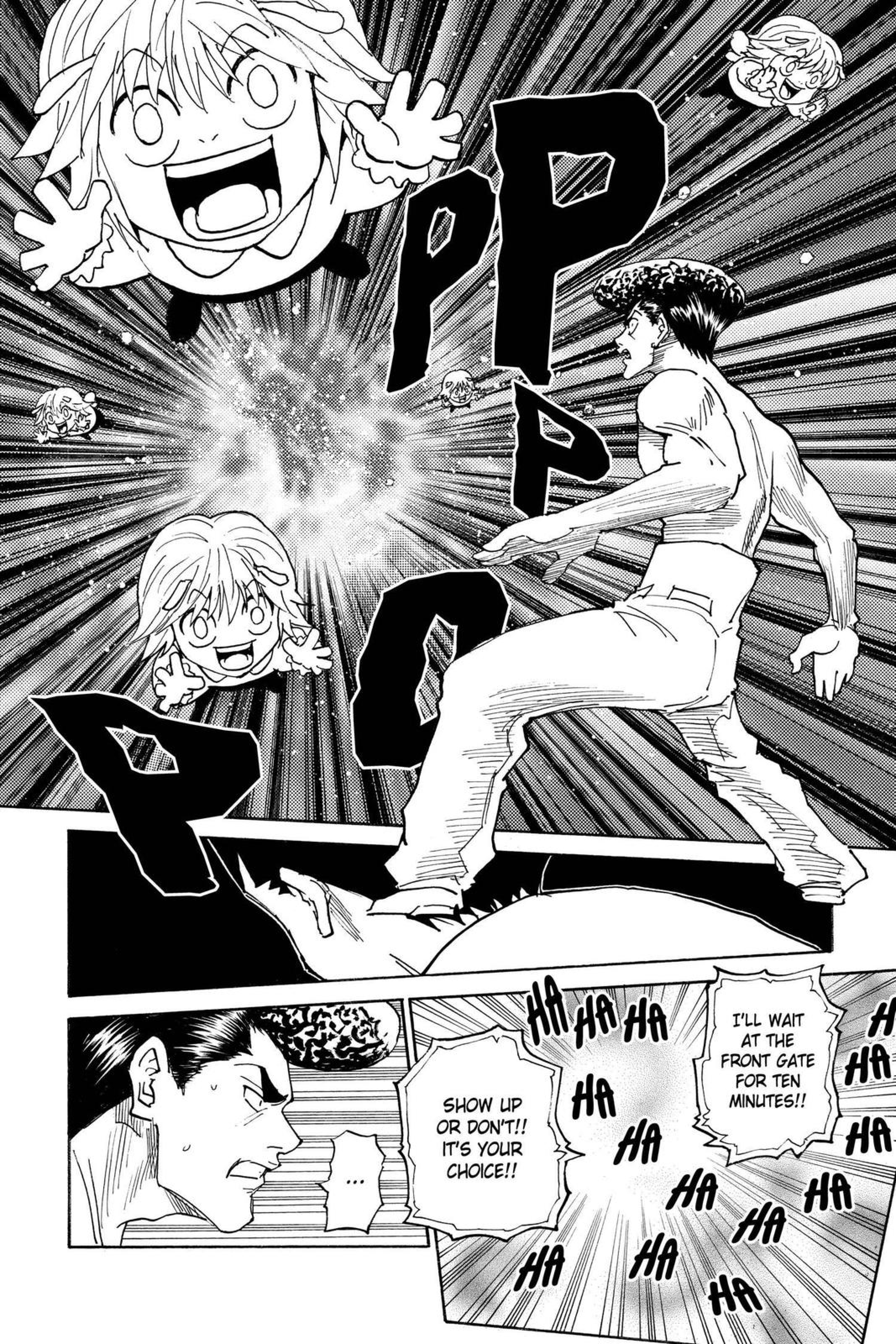

TO CONVINCE *HIM*.
HE TOLD ME NOT TO MOVE.
IF WE'RE GOING SOMEWHERE FOR A DUEL, I NEED HIS PERMISSION.
I'LL TAKE YOU ON IF I MUST...
...BUT I WON'T USE ANY OF MY ABILITIES.
WHAT I DESIRE IS A *DIALOGUE*.
THAT IS WHY.
POUF KNEW THAT THE TYPE OF PERSON WHO'D DEMAND A DUEL...
...BY HAILING HIM FROM BEHIND...
...WOULD ADMIRE AN HONEST APPROACH.
LIAR.
YOU TRIED TO SNEAK UP...
...AND KILL ME.

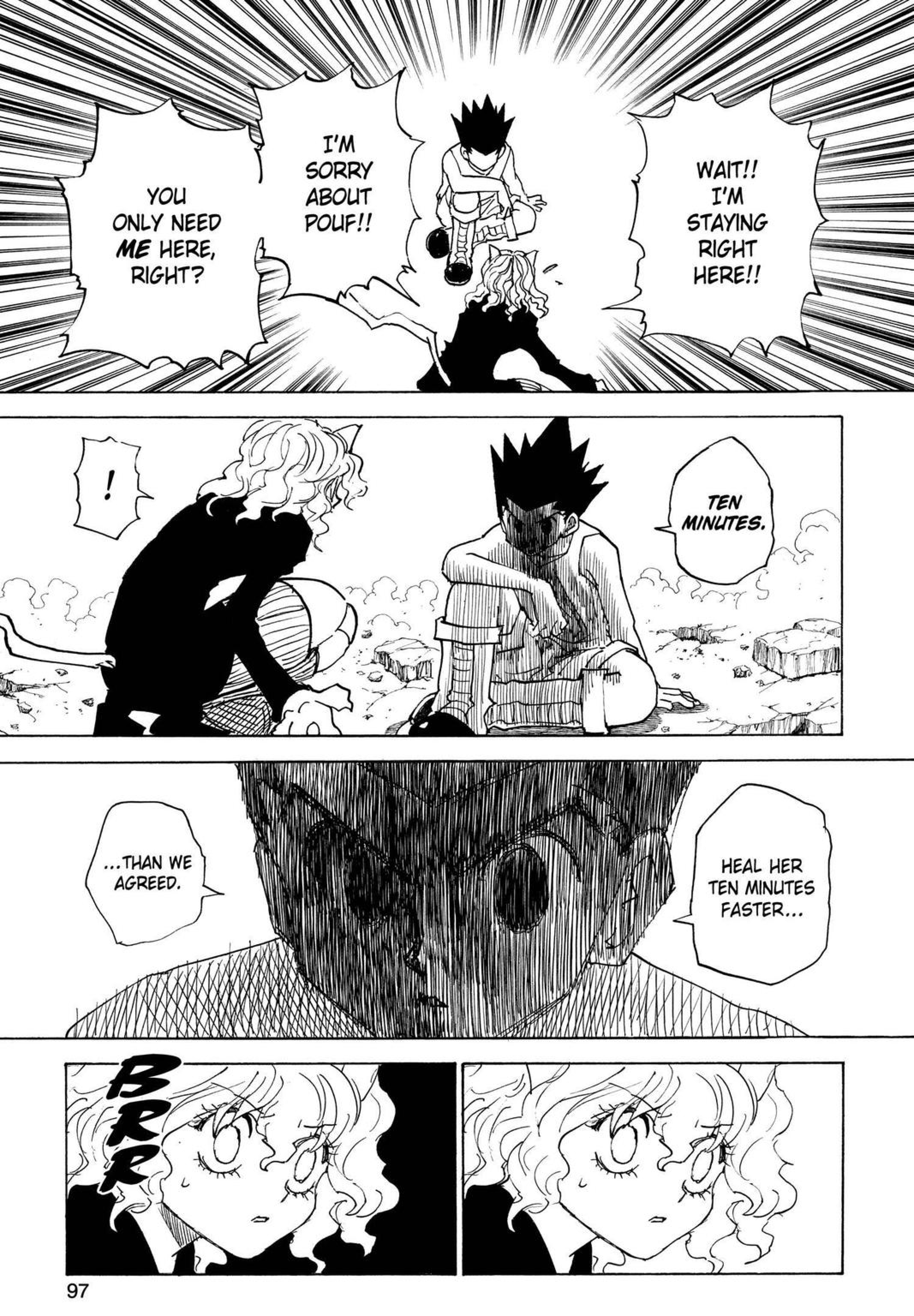
READ THIS WAY

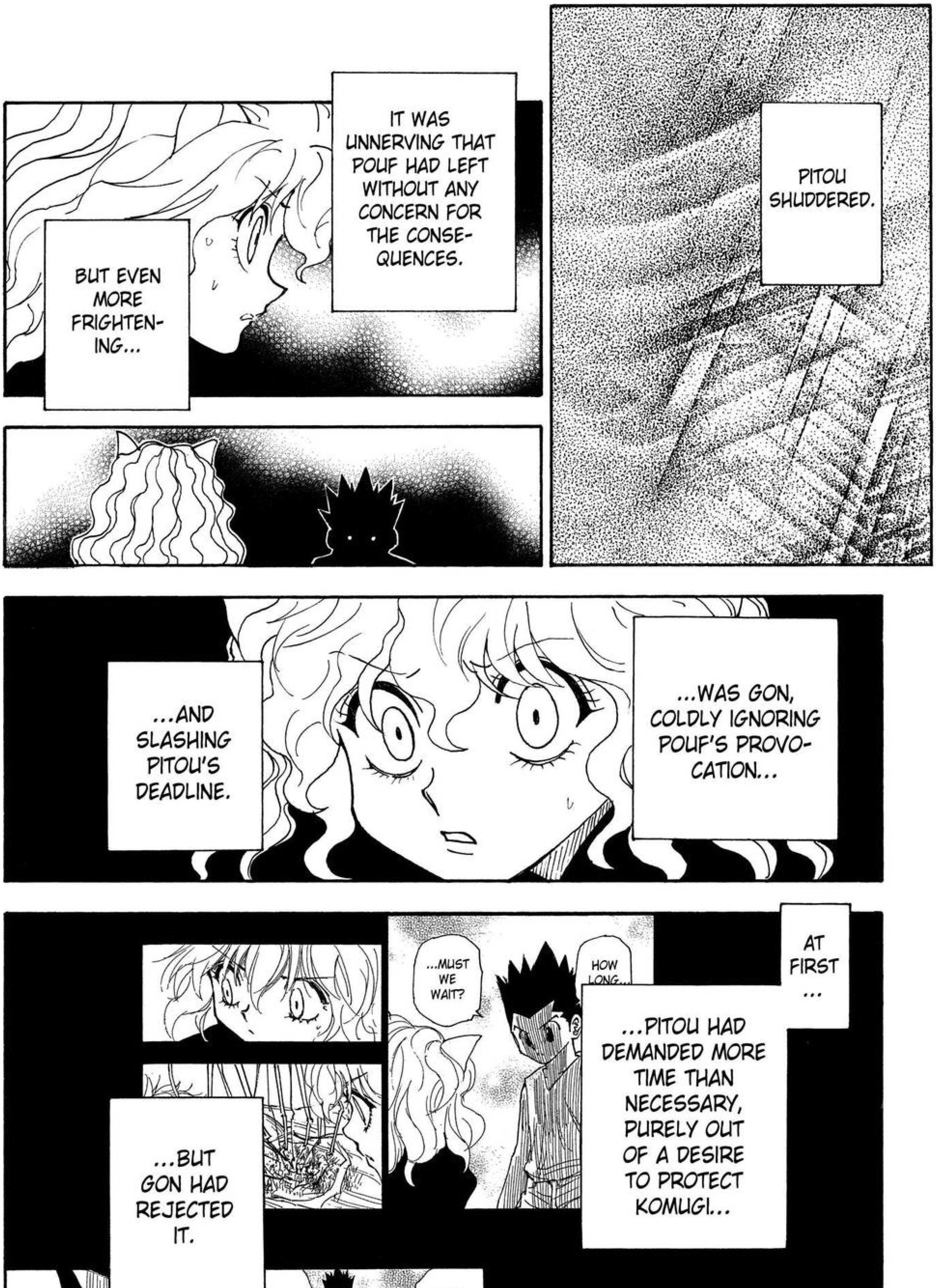

YOU SAID SO YOURSELF.
DON'T BE TRICKED, KNUCKLE.
YOU'RE A SHELL AND NOT THE REAL POUF?
HOW DO WE EVEN KNOW THAT'S TRUE?
OH YEAH...
...
THIS KID...
...IS TROUBLE.


OF ALL OUR ENEMIES ...
...HE HAS THE MOST UNWAVERING DETERMINATION!!
PERHAPS I SHOULD BE GRATEFUL...
...THAT HE'S PREOCCUPIED WITH PITOU.
IT'S BECAUSE OF HIS IRON WILL ...
...THAT HE'S SITTING THERE.
I CAN'T PROVE WHETHER I'M REAL...
...WITHOUT GIVING MYSELF AN EXTREME HANDICAP.
YOU YOURSELF...
...WILL HAVE TO DECIDE.
SO...
VMM

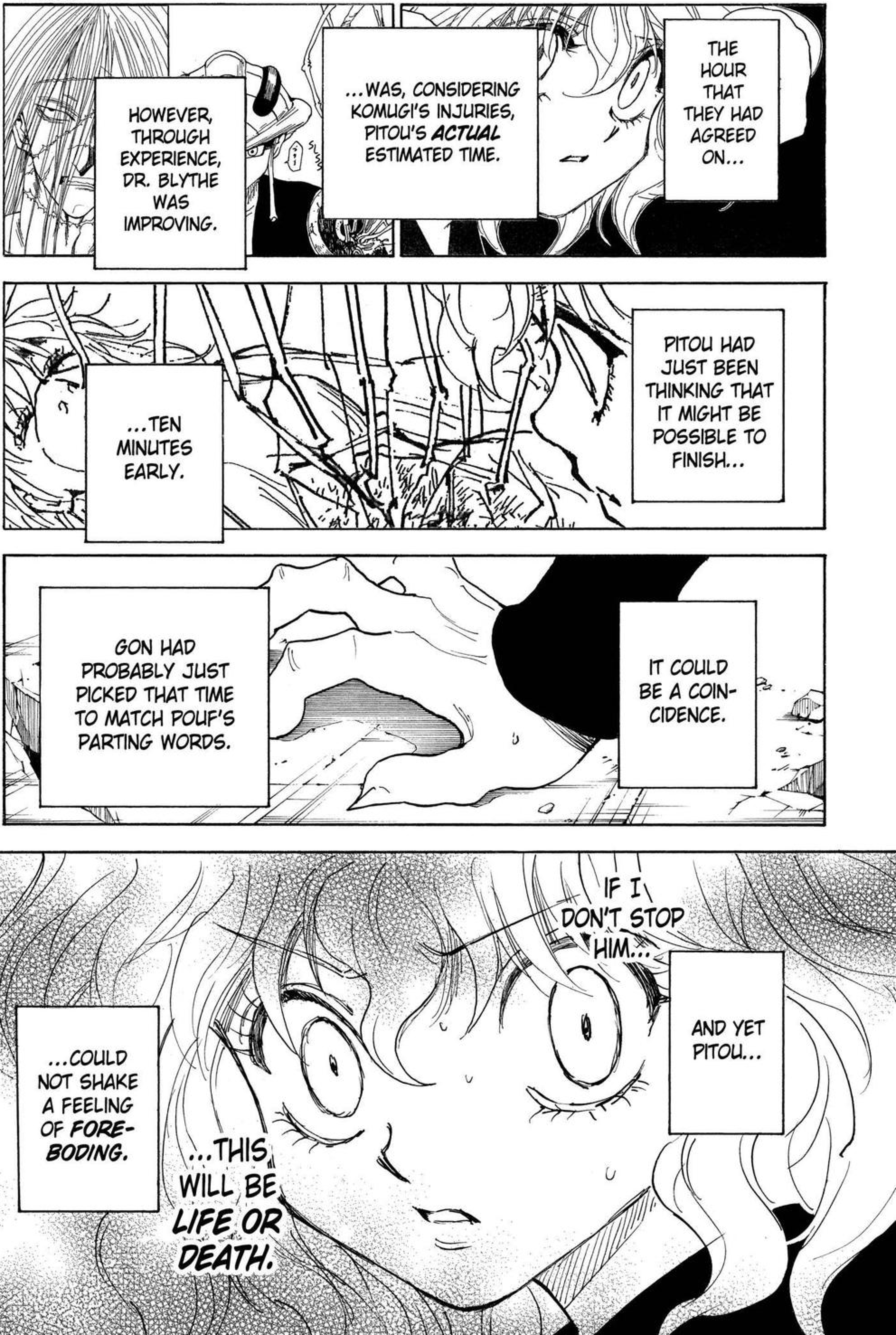

...WHAT HAPPENS NEXT...
...IS UP TO YOU.
...NO.
DON'T!!

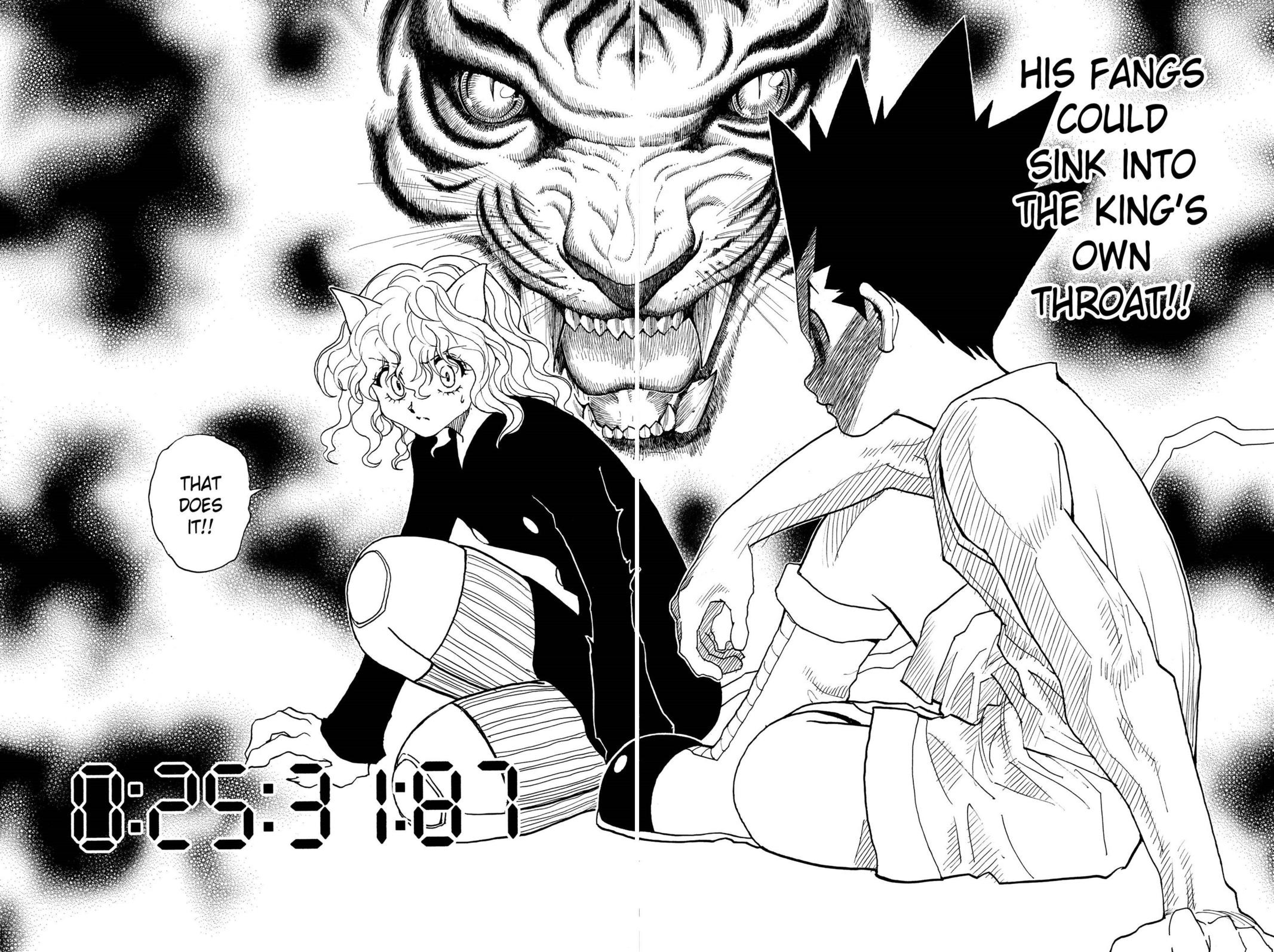

PPPPP
I'LL WAIT AT THE FRONT GATE FOR TEN MINUTES!!
SHOW UP OR DON'T!! IT'S YOUR CHOICE!!
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
...

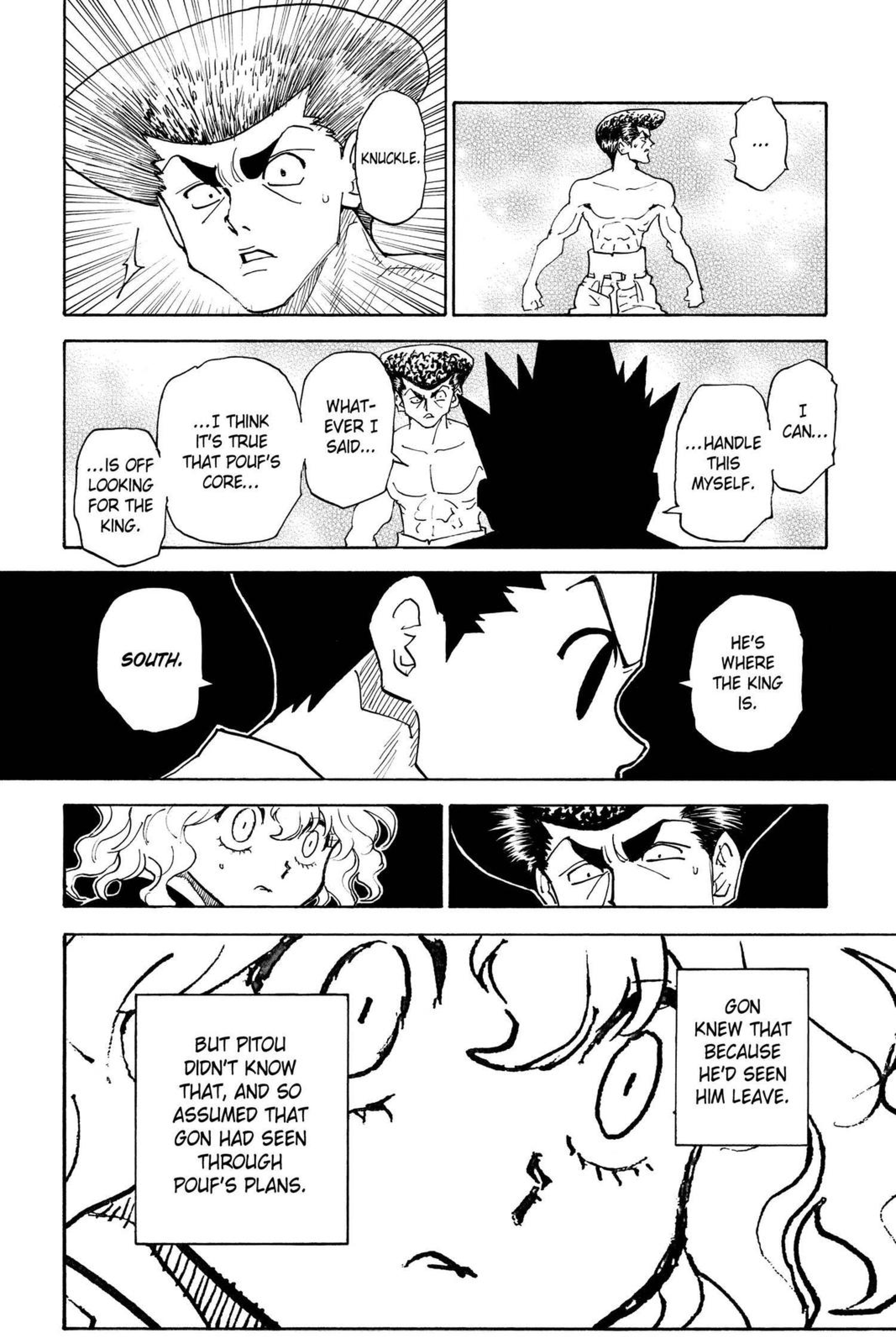

WAIT!! I'M STAYING RIGHT HERE!!
I'M SORRY ABOUT POUF!!
YOU ONLY NEED *ME* HERE, RIGHT?
TEN MINUTES.
!
HEAL HER TEN MINUTES FASTER…
…THAN WE AGREED.
BRRR

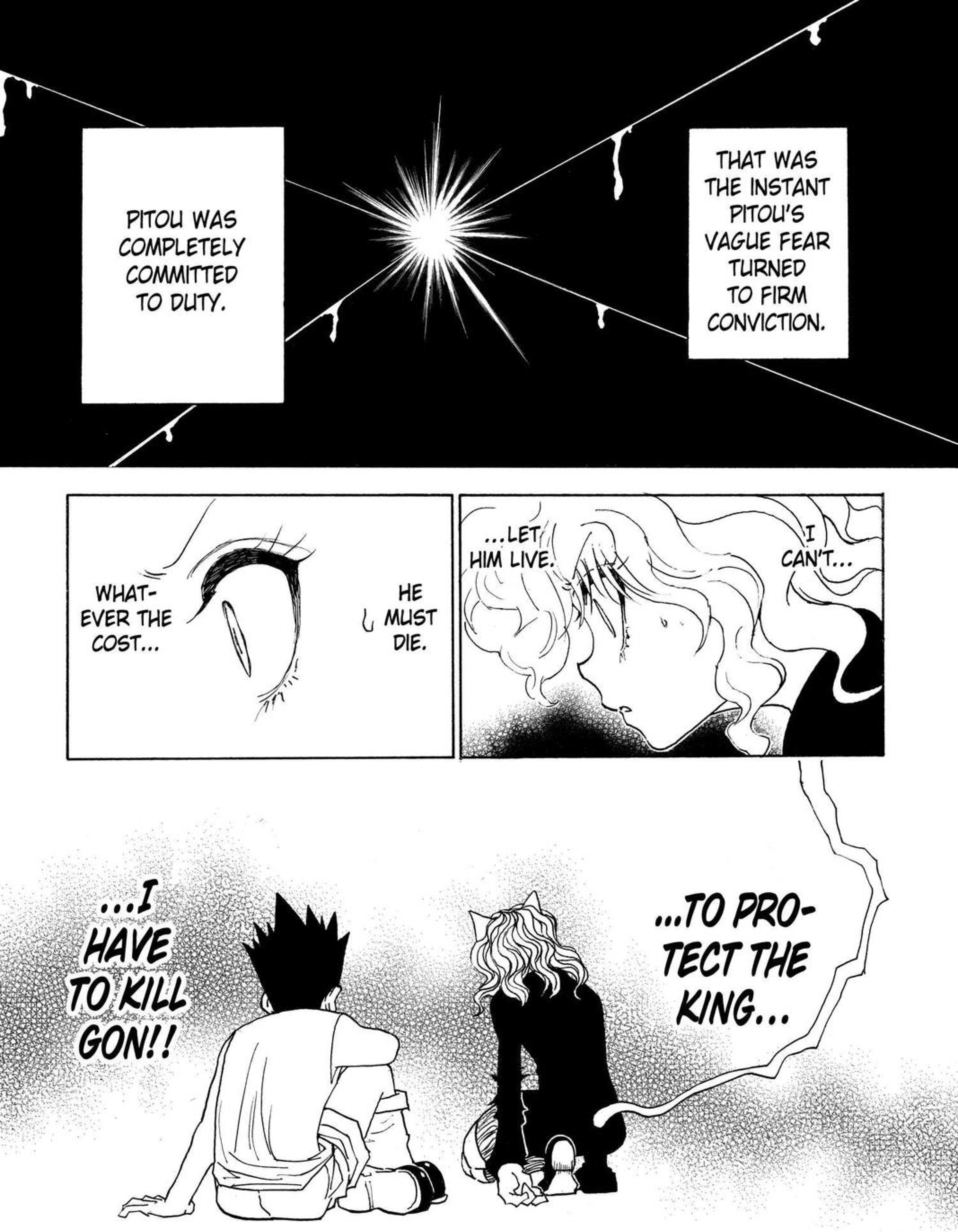

PITOU SHUDDERED.
IT WAS UNNERVING THAT POUF HAD LEFT WITHOUT ANY CONCERN FOR THE CONSEQUENCES.
BUT EVEN MORE FRIGHTENING...
...WAS GON, COLDLY IGNORING POUF'S PROVOCATION...
...AND SLASHING PITOU'S DEADLINE.
AT FIRST...
...PITOU HAD DEMANDED MORE TIME THAN NECESSARY, PURELY OUT OF A DESIRE TO PROTECT KOMUGI...
HOW LONG...
...MUST WE WAIT?
...BUT GON HAD REJECTED IT.
...
IT WILL TAKE THREE TO FOUR HOURS...
...TO HEAL HER BODY COMPLETELY.
NO.
I CAN'T WAIT.

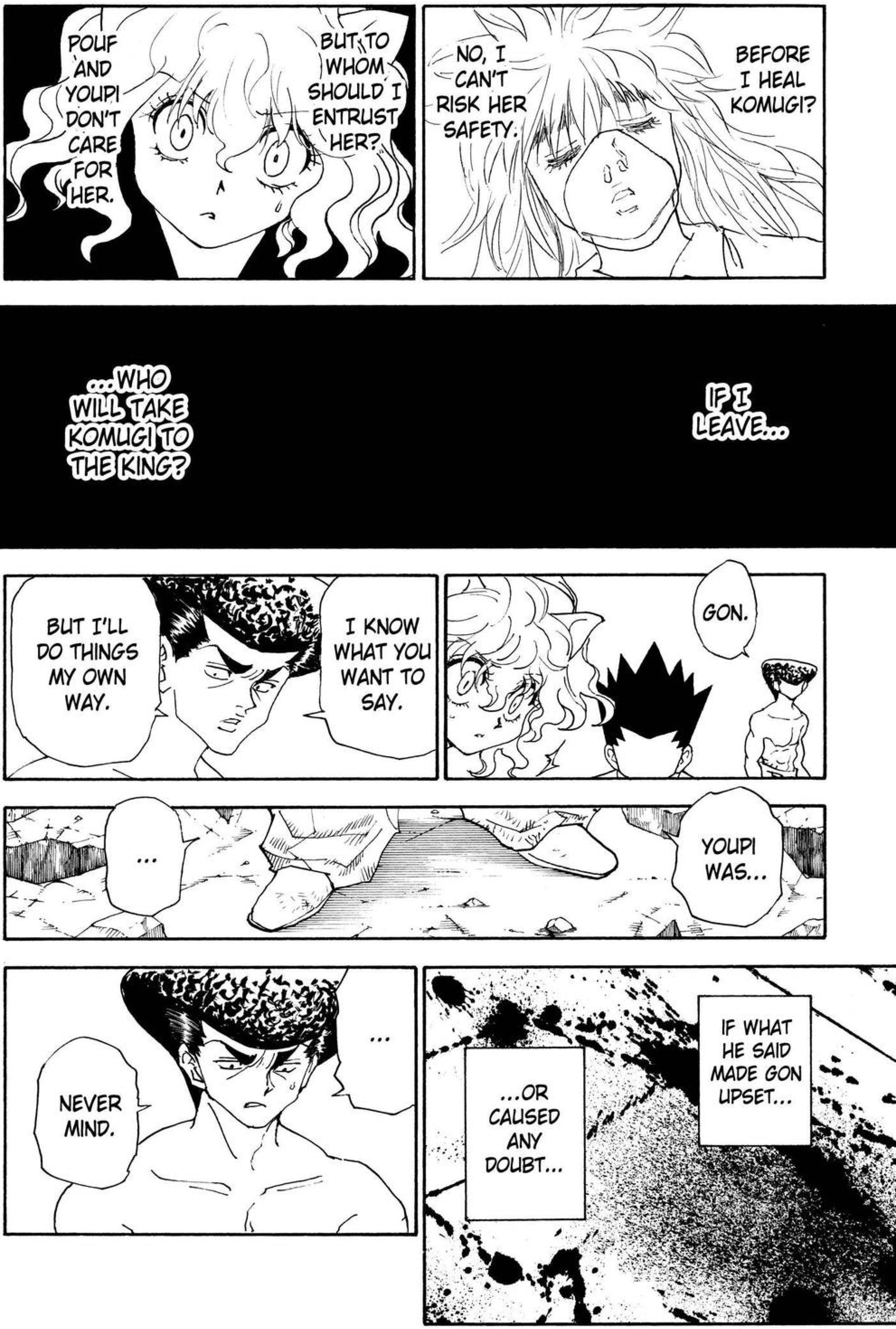
READ THIS WAY

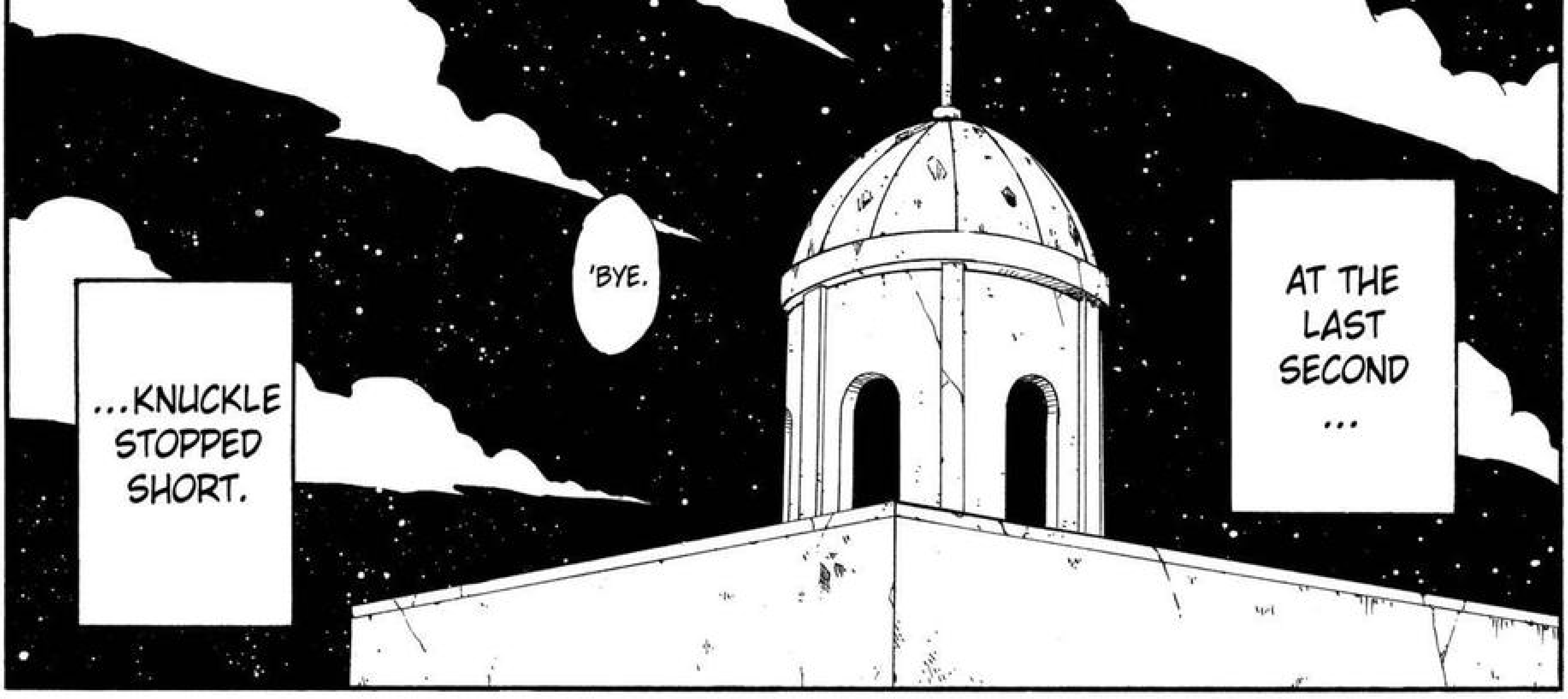

THE HOUR THAT THEY HAD AGREED ON…
…WAS, CONSIDERING KOMUGI'S INJURIES, PITOU'S ACTUAL ESTIMATED TIME.
HOWEVER, THROUGH EXPERIENCE, DR. BLYTHE WAS IMPROVING.
PITOU HAD JUST BEEN THINKING THAT IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO FINISH…
…TEN MINUTES EARLY.
IT COULD BE A COINCIDENCE.
GON HAD PROBABLY JUST PICKED THAT TIME TO MATCH POUF'S PARTING WORDS.
IF I DON'T STOP HIM…
…THIS WILL BE LIFE OR DEATH.
AND YET PITOU…
…COULD NOT SHAKE A FEELING OF FOREBODING.

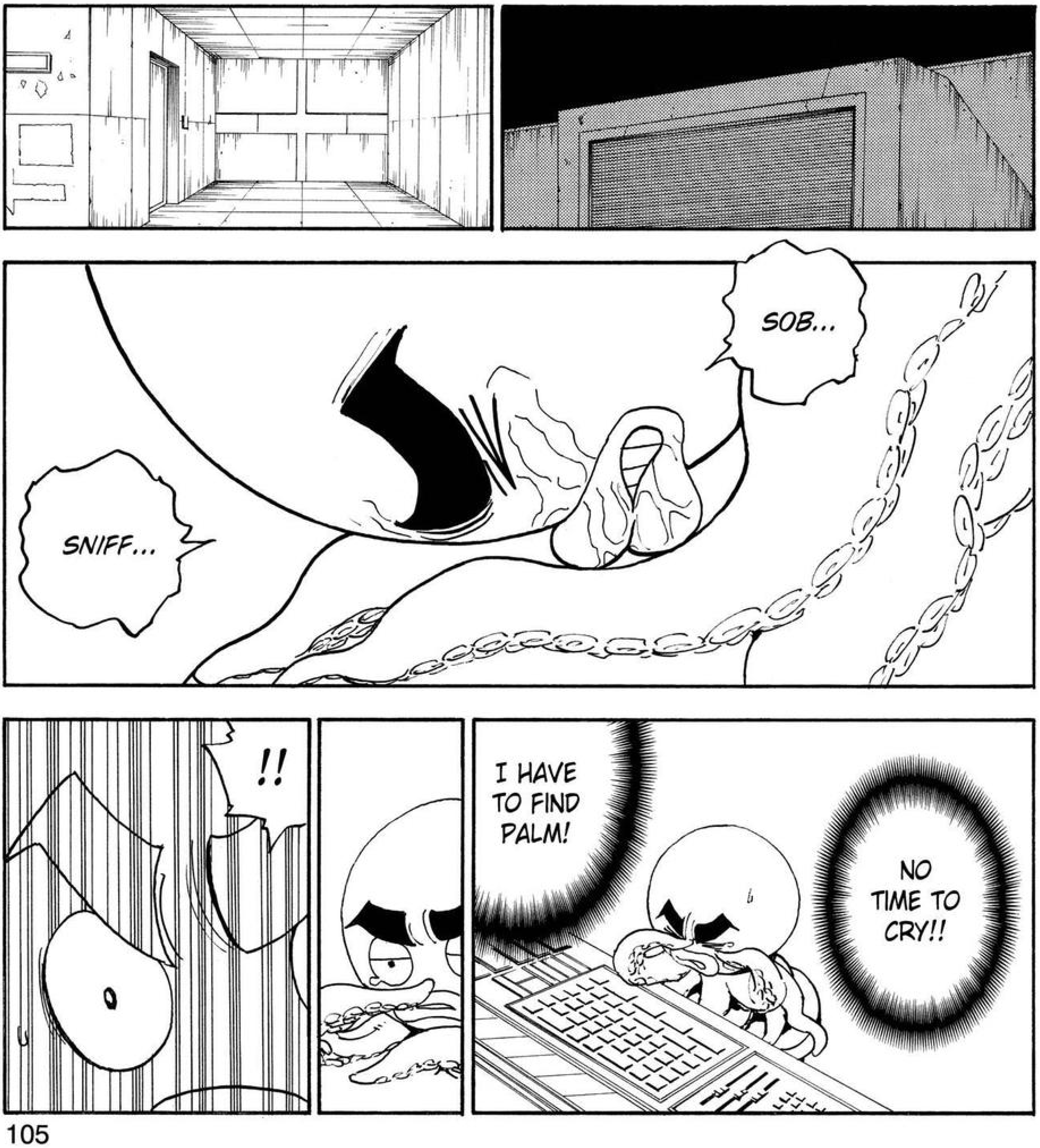

HIS FANGS COULD SINK INTO THE KING'S OWN THROAT!!
THAT DOES IT!!
0:25:31:87

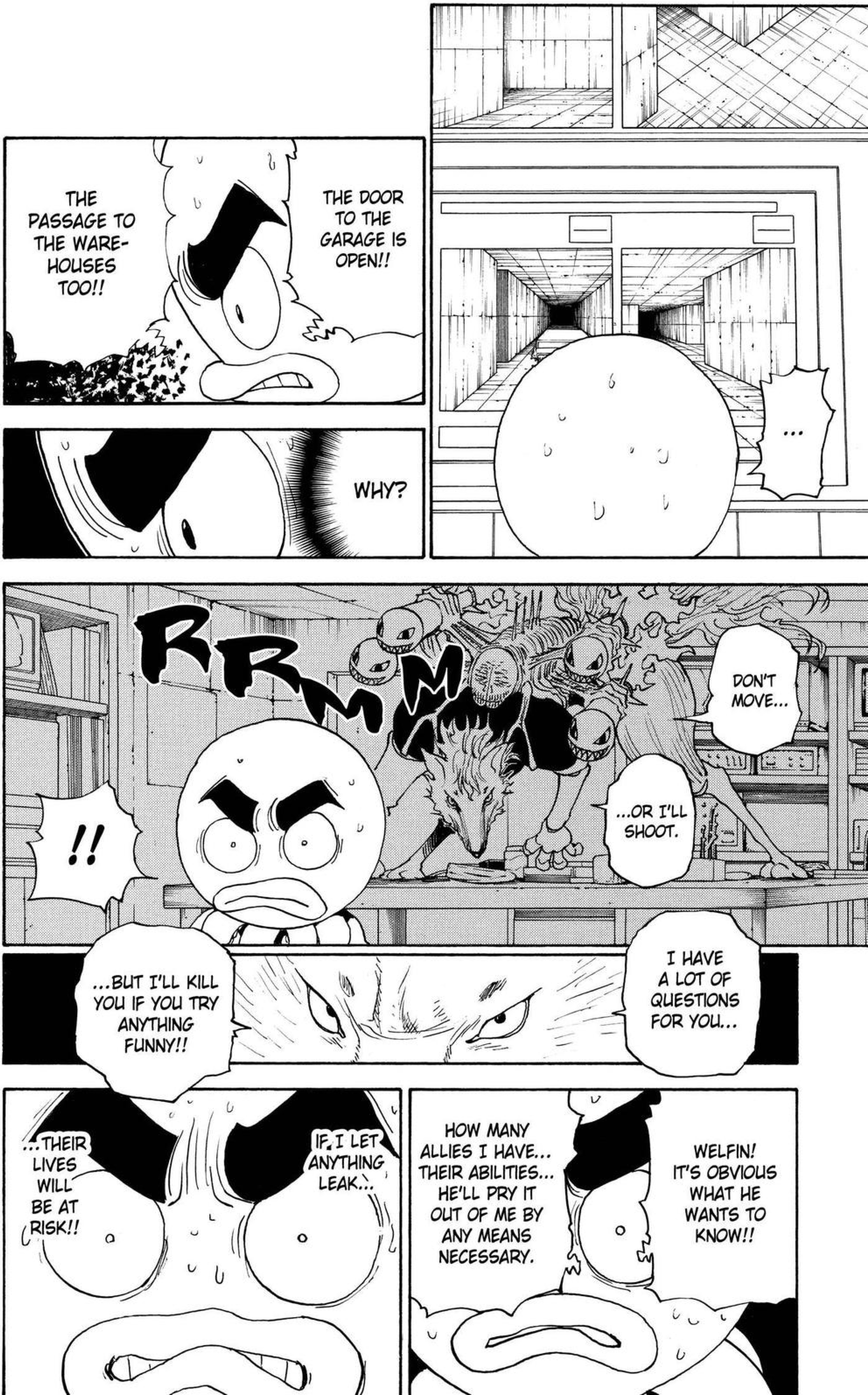

…
KNUCKLE.
I CAN…
…HANDLE THIS MYSELF.
WHATEVER I SAID…
…I THINK IT'S TRUE THAT POUF'S CORE…
…IS OFF LOOKING FOR THE KING.
HE'S WHERE THE KING IS.
SOUTH.
GON KNEW THAT BECAUSE HE'D SEEN HIM LEAVE.
BUT PITOU DIDN'T KNOW THAT, AND SO ASSUMED THAT GON HAD SEEN THROUGH POUF'S PLANS.

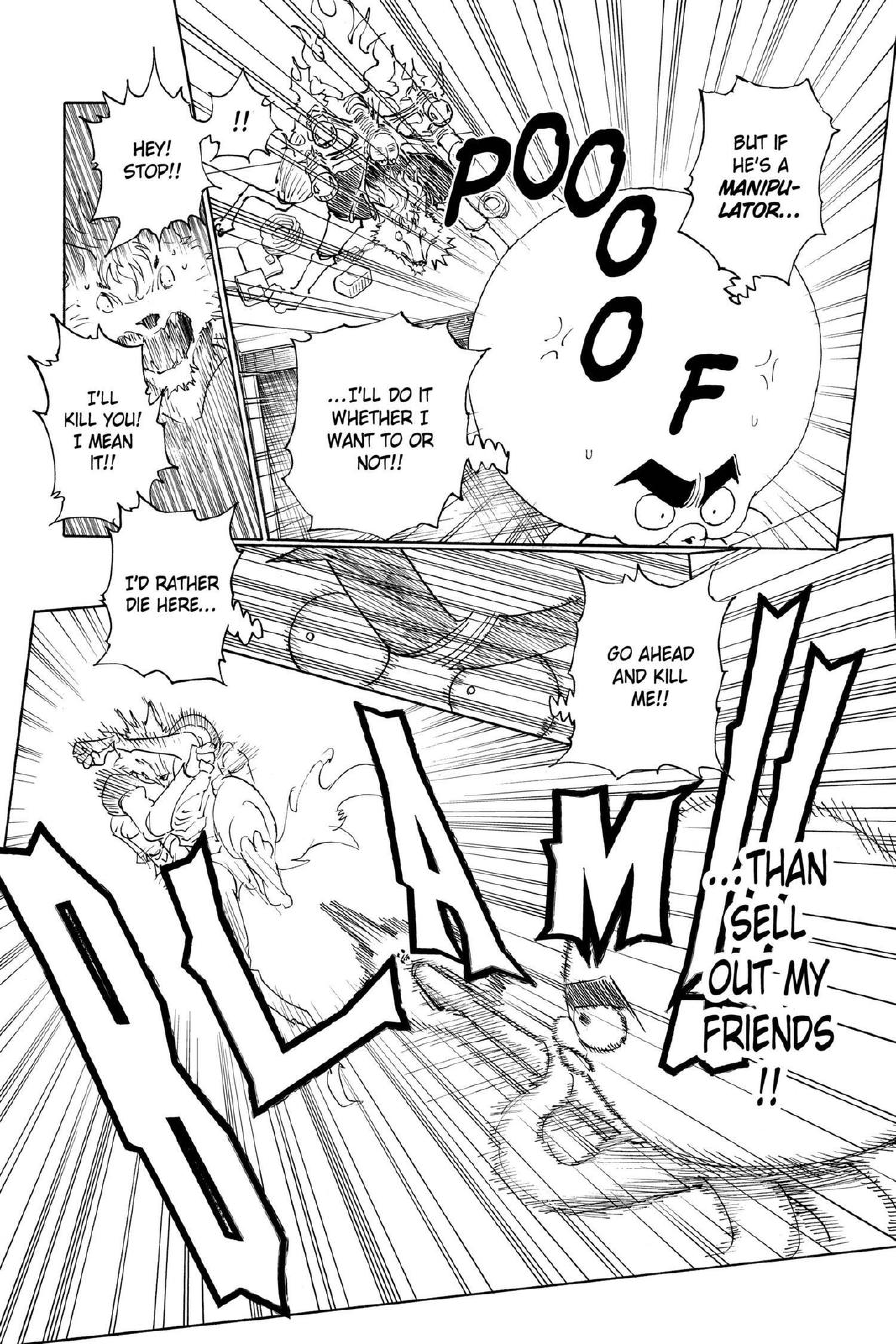

THAT WAS THE INSTANT PITOU'S VAGUE FEAR TURNED TO FIRM CONVICTION.
PITOU WAS COMPLETELY COMMITTED TO DUTY.
I CAN'T...
...LET HIM LIVE.
HE MUST DIE.
WHATEVER THE COST...
...TO PROTECT THE KING...
...I HAVE TO KILL GON!!


BEFORE I HEAL KOMUGI?
NO, I CAN'T RISK HER SAFETY.
BUT TO WHOM SHOULD I ENTRUST HER?
POUF AND YOUPI DON'T CARE FOR HER.
IF I LEAVE...
...WHO WILL TAKE KOMUGI TO THE KING?
GON.
I KNOW WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY.
BUT I'LL DO THINGS MY OWN WAY.
YOUPI WAS...
...
IF WHAT HE SAID MADE GON UPSET...
...OR CAUSED ANY DOUBT...
...
NEVER MIND.

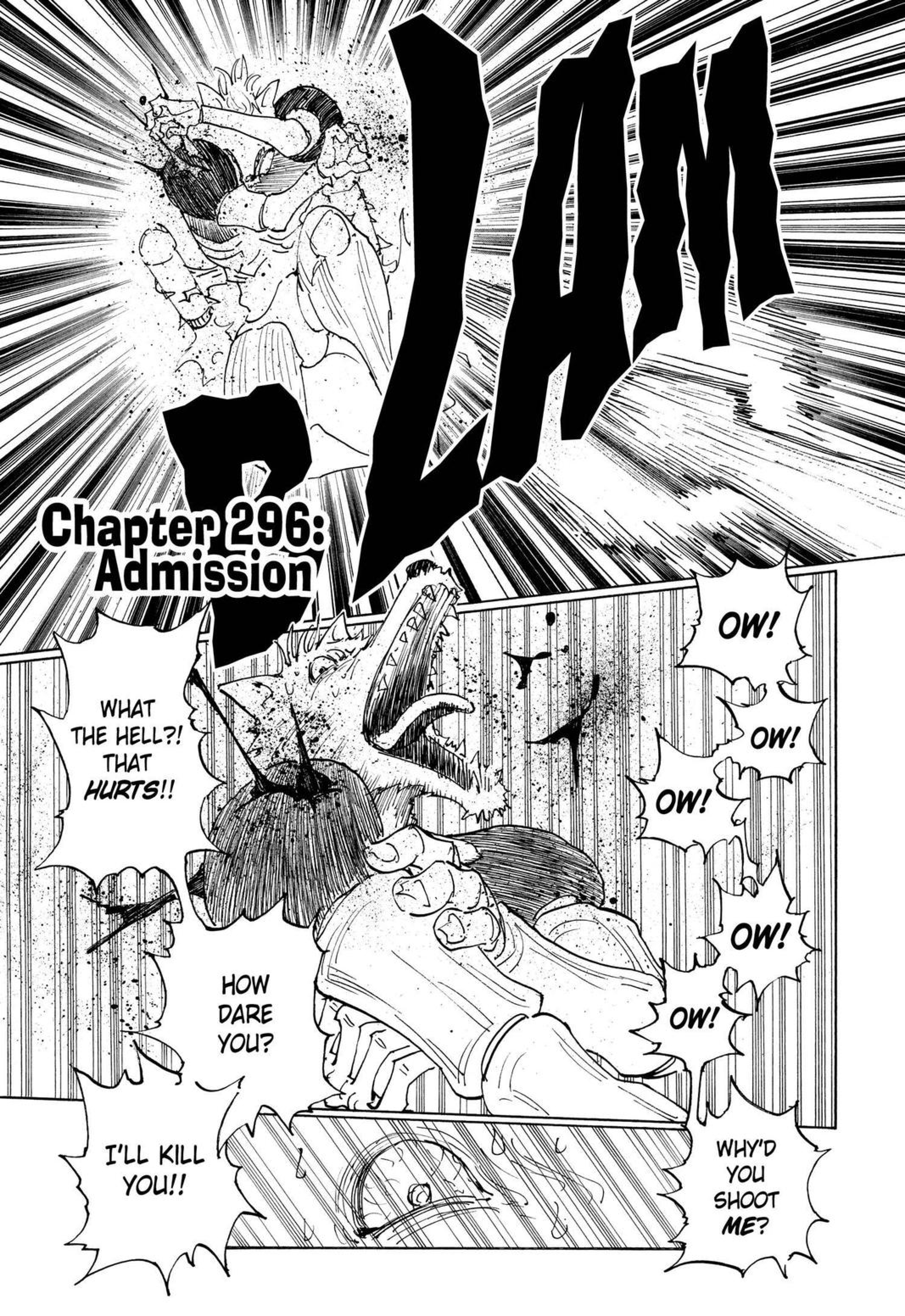

AT THE LAST SECOND...
'BYE.
...KNUCKLE STOPPED SHORT.

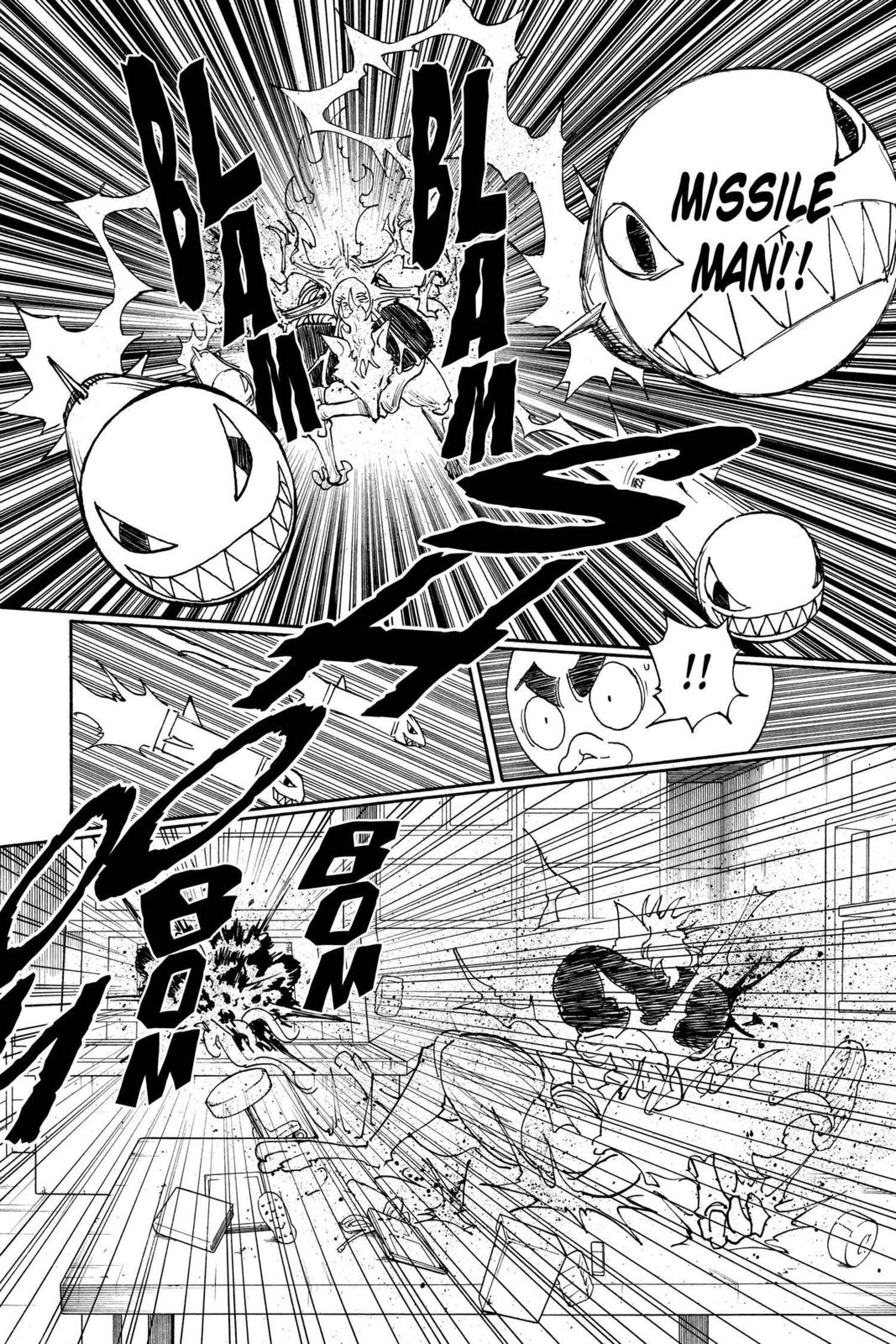

SOB...
SNIFF...
!!
NO TIME TO CRY!!
I HAVE TO FIND PALM!

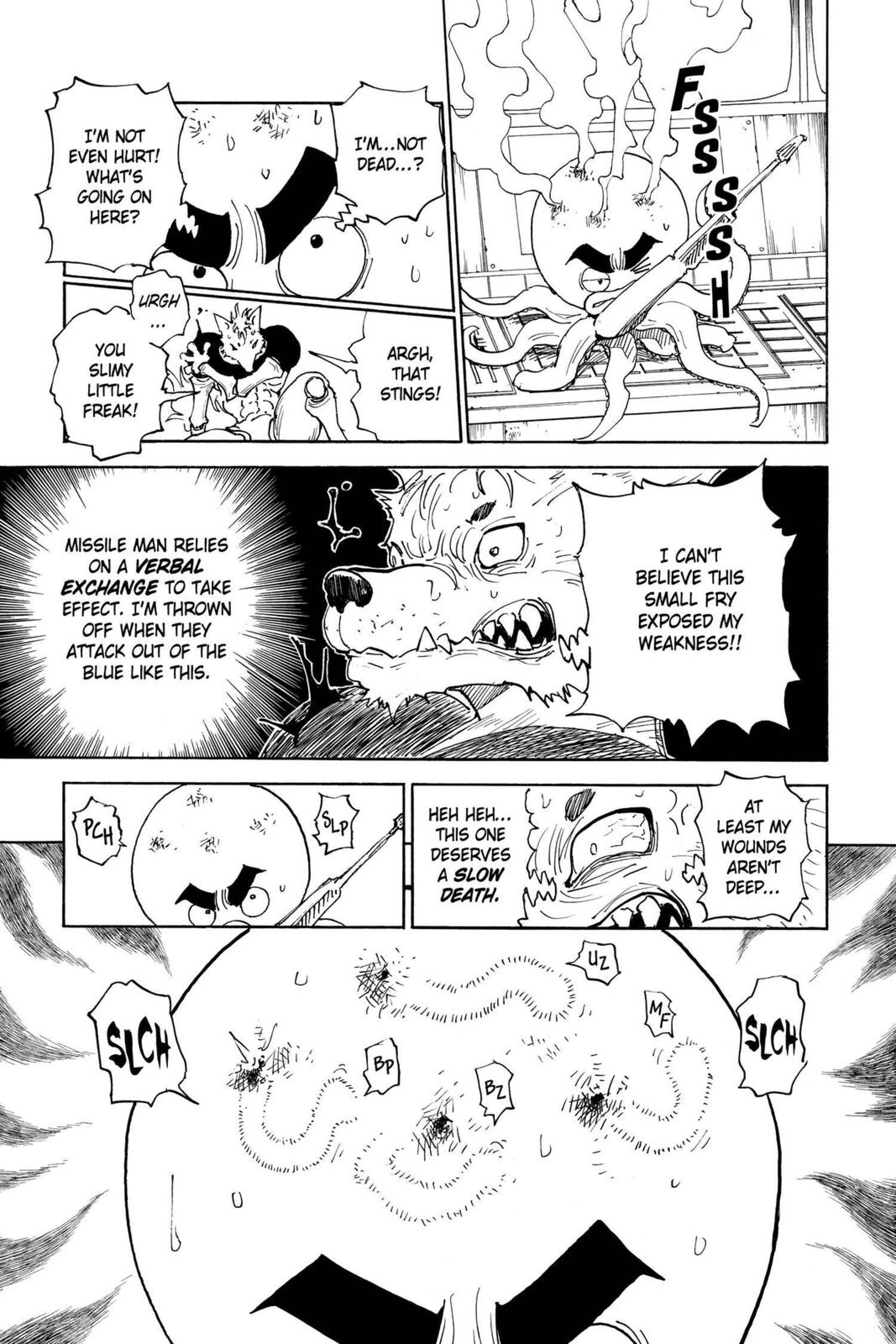

...
THE DOOR TO THE GARAGE IS OPEN!!
THE PASSAGE TO THE WAREHOUSES TOO!!
WHY?
DON'T MOVE...
...OR I'LL SHOOT.
RRMM
!!
I HAVE A LOT OF QUESTIONS FOR YOU...
...BUT I'LL KILL YOU IF YOU TRY ANYTHING FUNNY!!
WELFIN! IT'S OBVIOUS WHAT HE WANTS TO KNOW!!
HOW MANY ALLIES I HAVE... THEIR ABILITIES... HE'LL PRY IT OUT OF ME BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY.
IF I LET ANYTHING LEAK...
...THEIR LIVES WILL BE AT RISK!!

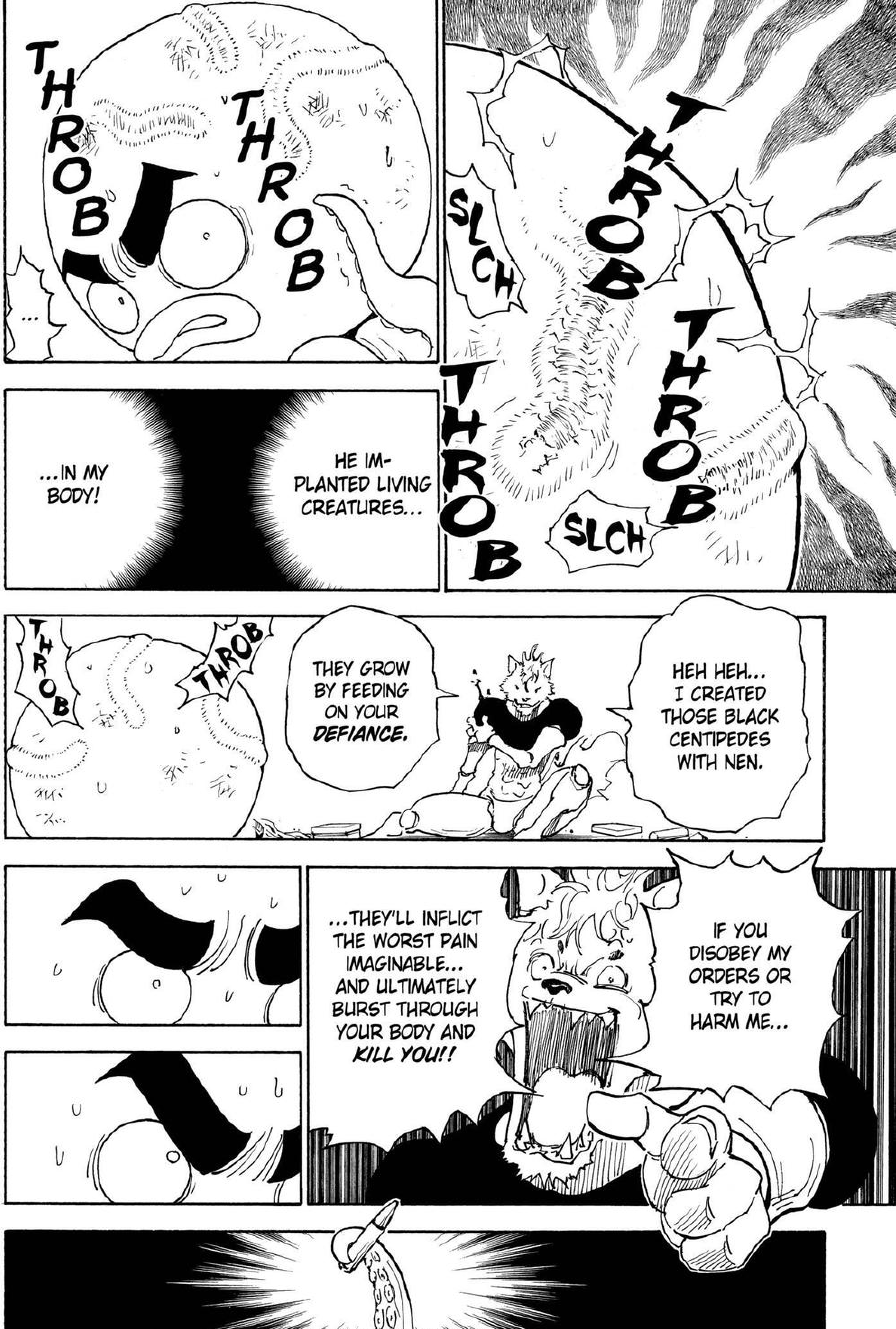

BUT IF HE'S A MANIPULATOR...
POOOOF
...I'LL DO IT WHETHER I WANT TO OR NOT!!
!!
HEY! STOP!!
I'LL KILL YOU! I MEAN IT!!
GO AHEAD AND KILL ME!!
I'D RATHER DIE HERE...
...THAN SELL OUT MY FRIENDS!!
BLAM!!

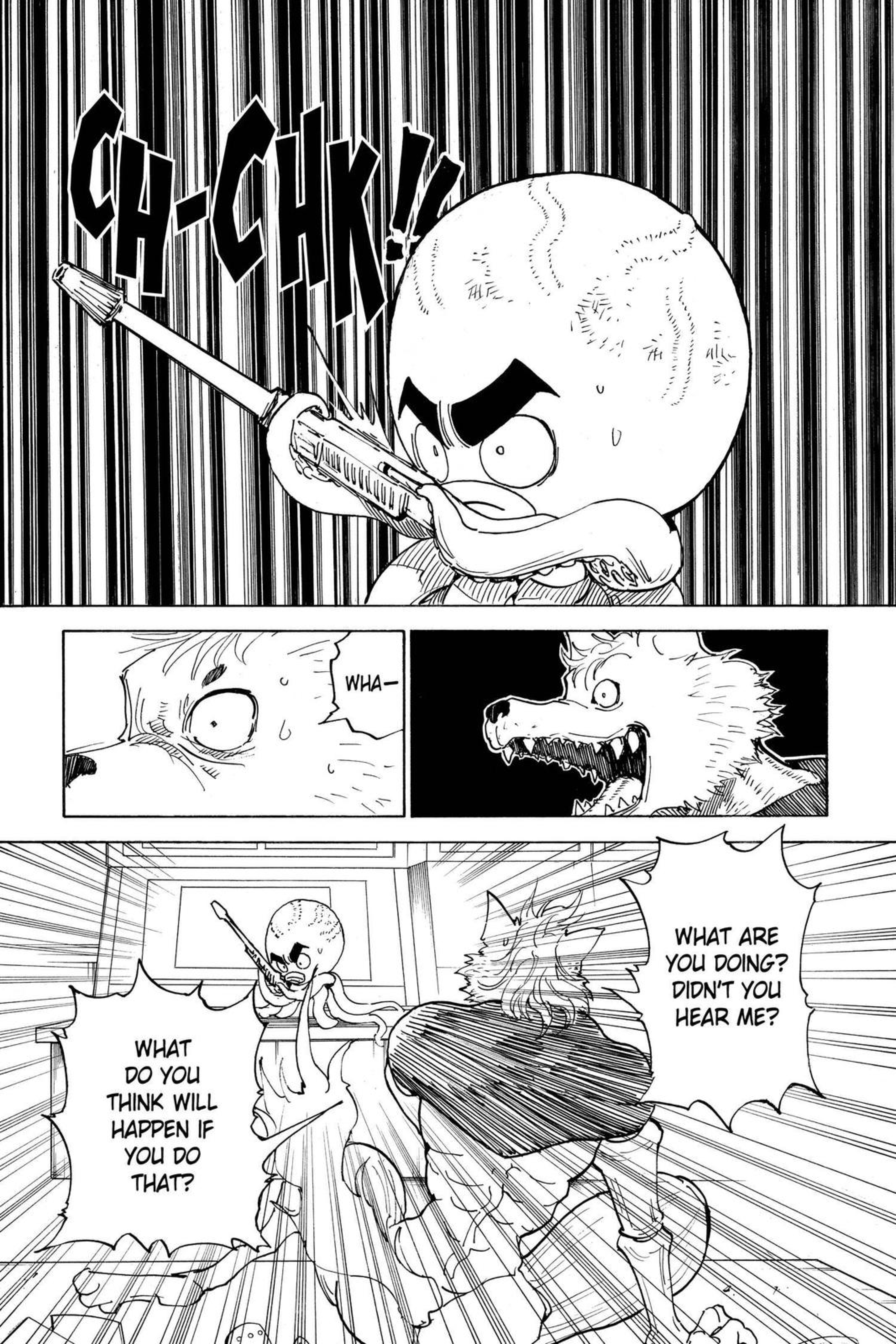
Chapter 296: Admission

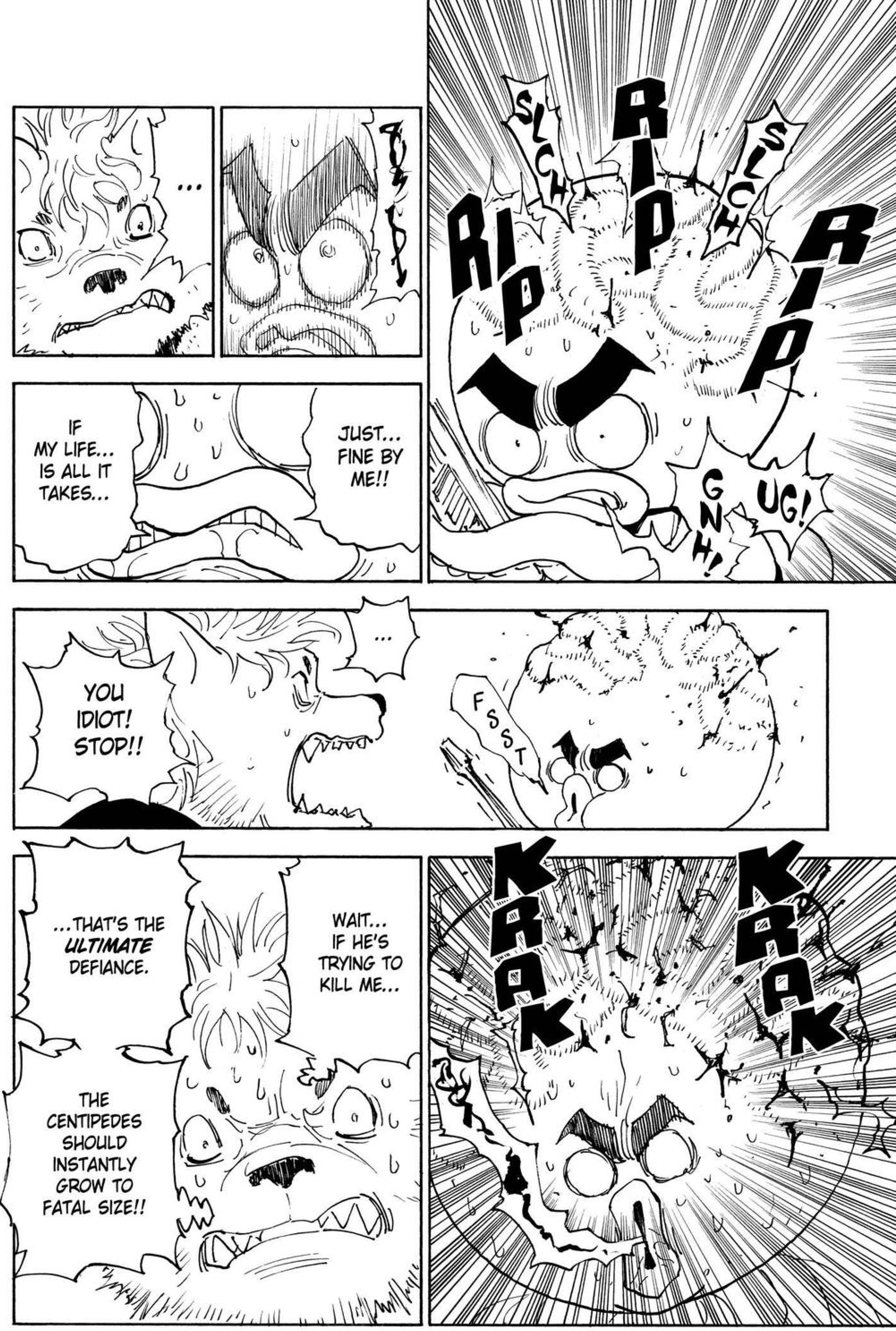

SLAM
OW!
OW!
OW!
OW!
OW!
WHAT THE HELL?! THAT *HURTS*!!
HOW DARE YOU?
WHY'D YOU SHOOT *ME*?
I'LL KILL YOU!!

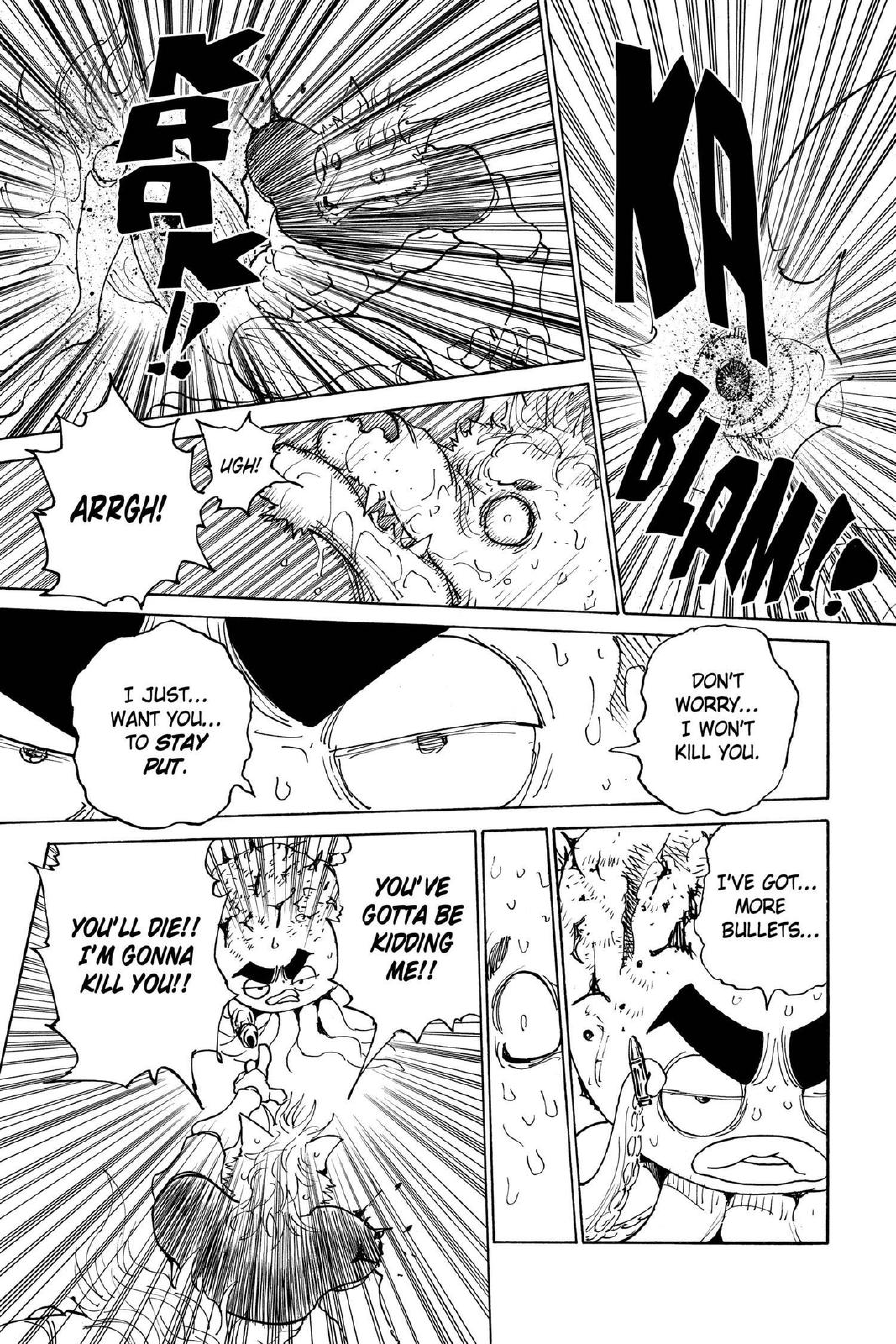

MISSILE MAN!!
BLAM
BLAM
SHOOM
!!
BOOM
BOOM

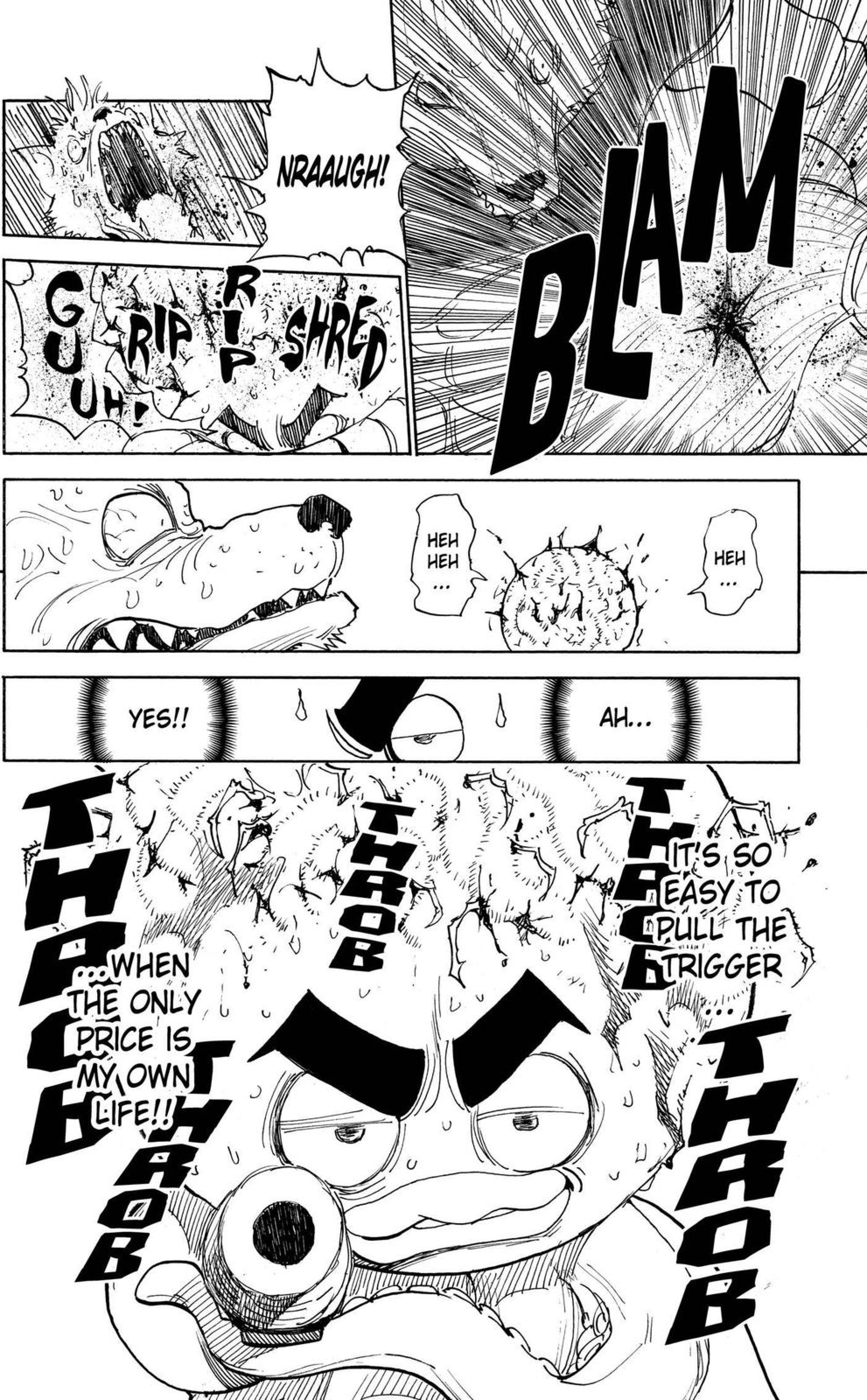

FSSSH
I'M...NOT DEAD...?
I'M NOT EVEN HURT! WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
ARGH, THAT STINGS!
URGH...
YOU SLIMY LITTLE FREAK!
I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS SMALL FRY EXPOSED MY WEAKNESS!!
MISSILE MAN RELIES ON A ***VERBAL EXCHANGE*** TO TAKE EFFECT. I'M THROWN OFF WHEN THEY ATTACK OUT OF THE BLUE LIKE THIS.
AT LEAST MY WOUNDS AREN'T DEEP...
HEH HEH... THIS ONE DESERVES A ***SLOW DEATH.***
SLP
PCH
SLCH
UZ
MF
BZ
BP
SLCH

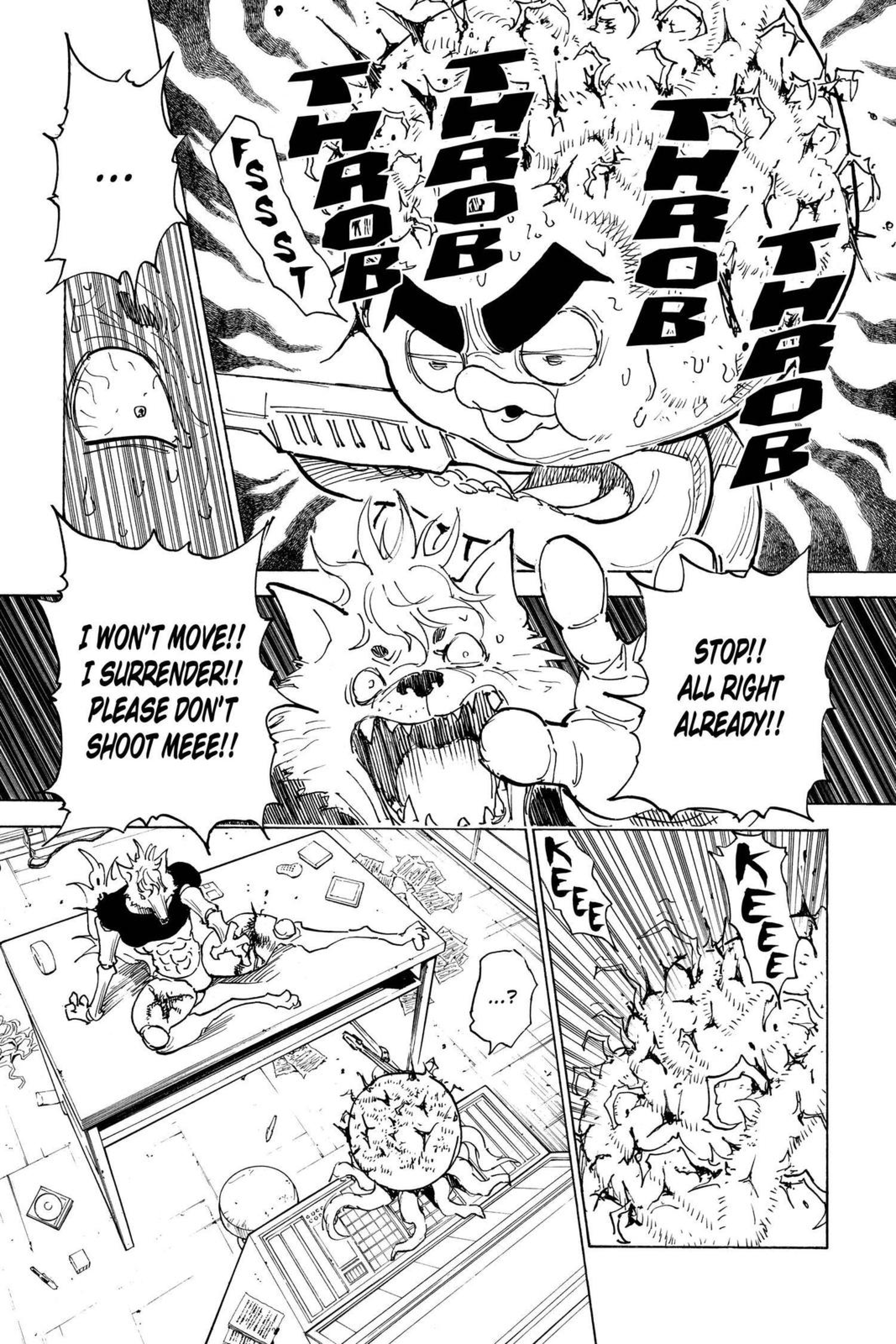

THROB
THROB
SLCH
SLCH
THROB
THROB
THROB
THROB
...
HE IMPLANTED LIVING CREATURES...
...IN MY BODY!
HEH HEH... I CREATED THOSE BLACK CENTIPEDES WITH NEN.
THEY GROW BY FEEDING ON YOUR *DEFIANCE.*
THROB
THROB
IF YOU DISOBEY MY ORDERS OR TRY TO HARM ME...
...THEY'LL INFLICT THE WORST PAIN IMAGINABLE... AND ULTIMATELY BURST THROUGH YOUR BODY AND *KILL YOU!!*

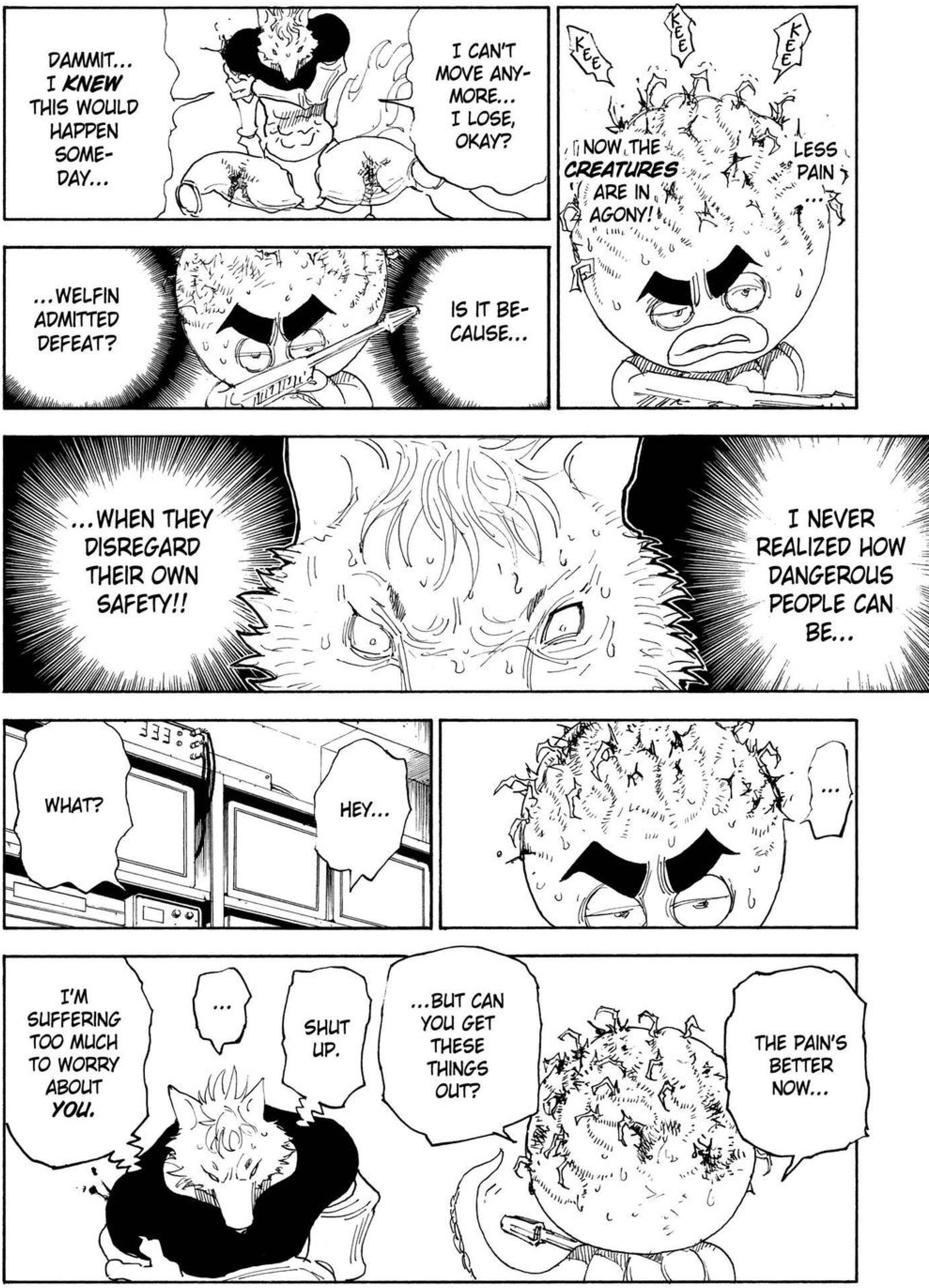

CH-CHK!!
WHA—
WHAT ARE YOU DOING? DIDN'T YOU HEAR ME?
WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL HAPPEN IF YOU DO THAT?


RIP
SLCH
RIP
SLCH
RIP
UG!
GNH!
...
IF MY LIFE... IS ALL IT TAKES...
JUST... FINE BY ME!!
FSST
...
YOU IDIOT! STOP!!
KRAK
KRAK
WAIT... IF HE'S TRYING TO KILL ME...
...THAT'S THE ***ULTIMATE*** DEFIANCE.
THE CENTIPEDES SHOULD INSTANTLY GROW TO FATAL SIZE!!

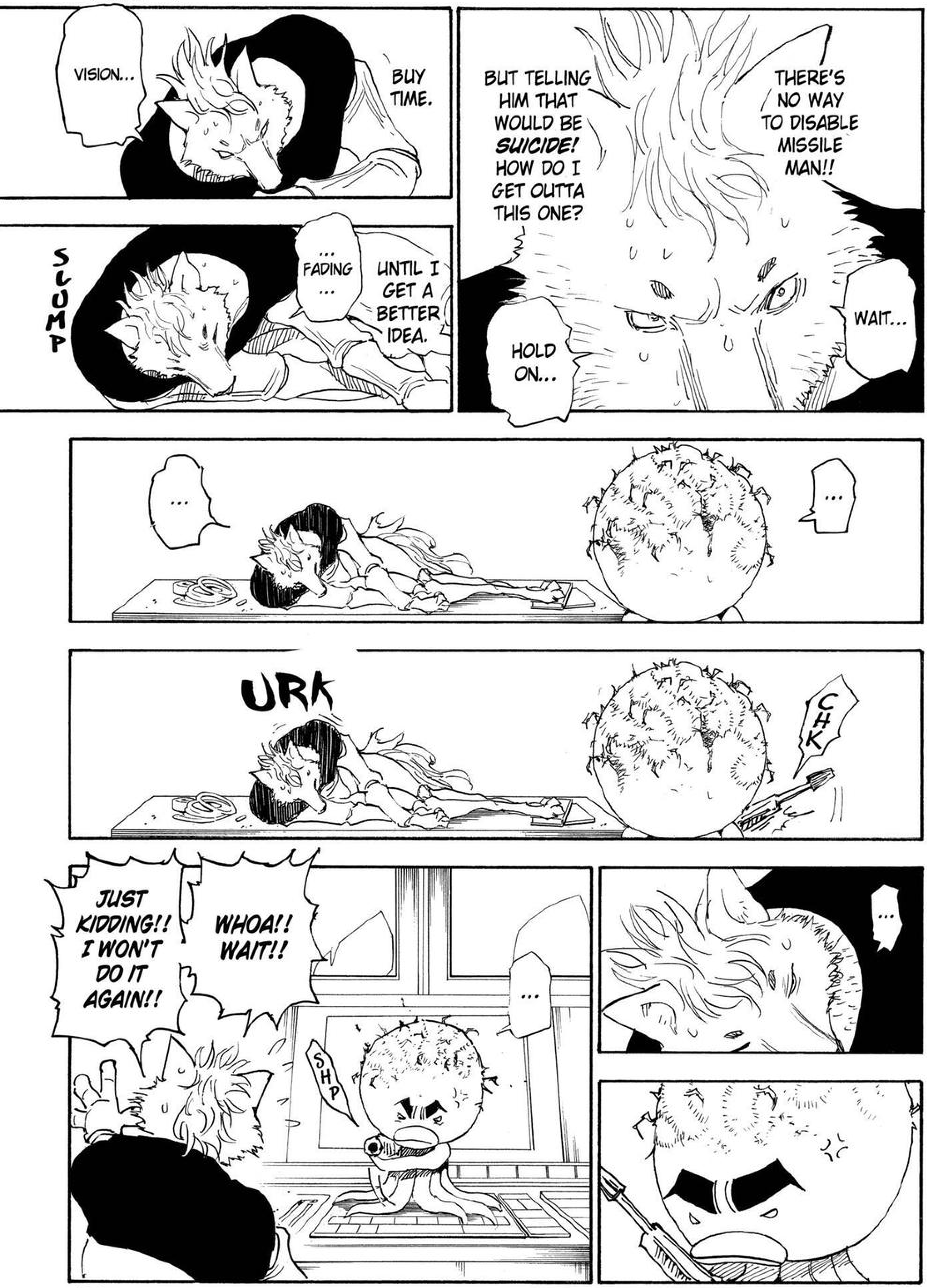

KA BLAM!!
KRAK!!
UGH!
ARRGH!
DON'T WORRY... I WON'T KILL YOU.
I JUST... WANT YOU... TO STAY PUT.
I'VE GOT... MORE BULLETS...
YOU'VE GOTTA BE KIDDING ME!!
YOU'LL DIE!! I'M GONNA KILL YOU!!

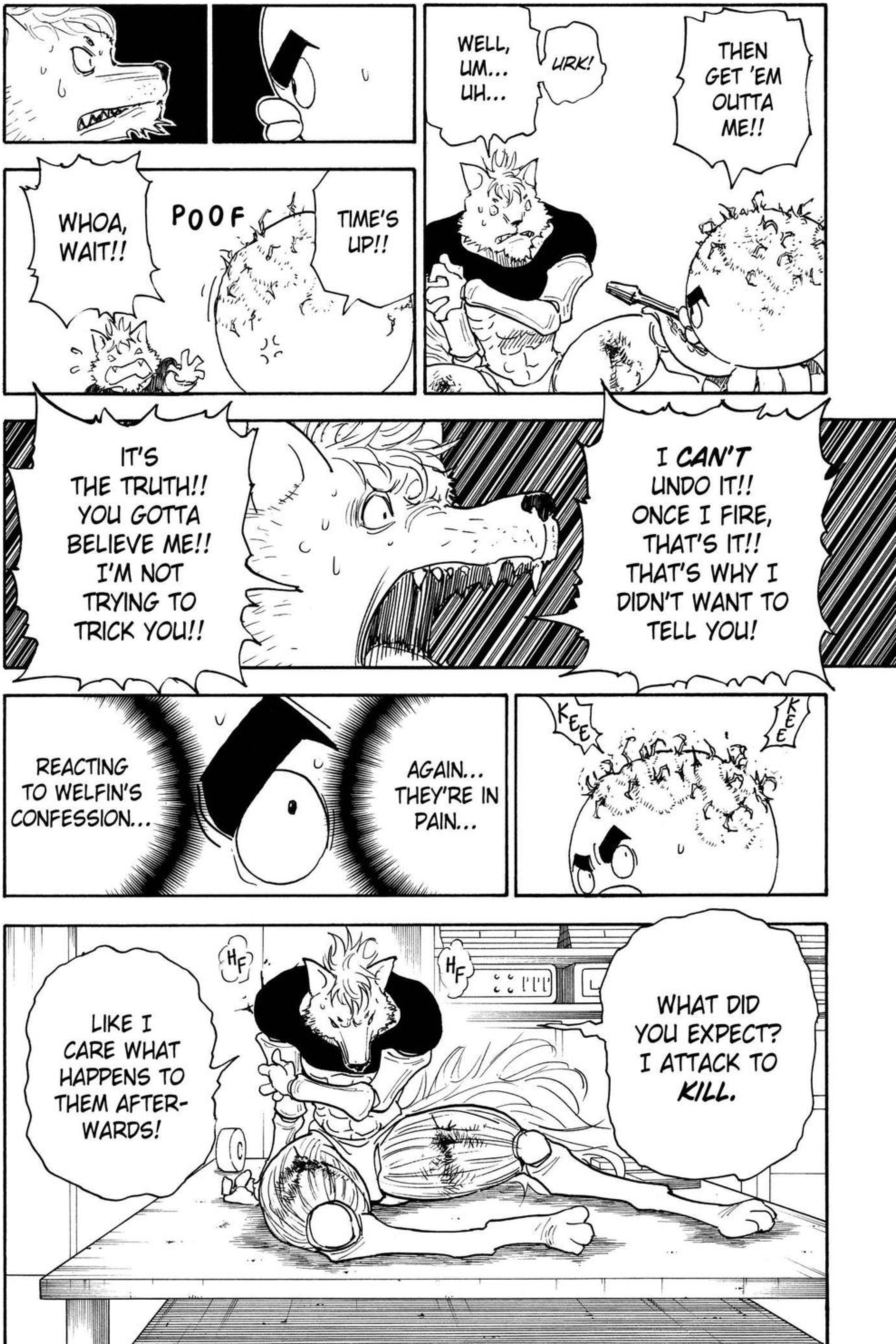

BLAM
NRAAUGH!
GUUH!
RIP
RIP
SHRED
HEH …
HEH HEH …
AH…
YES!!
THROB
THROB
THROB
THROB
THROB
IT'S SO EASY TO PULL THE TRIGGER …
…WHEN THE ONLY PRICE IS MY OWN LIFE!!

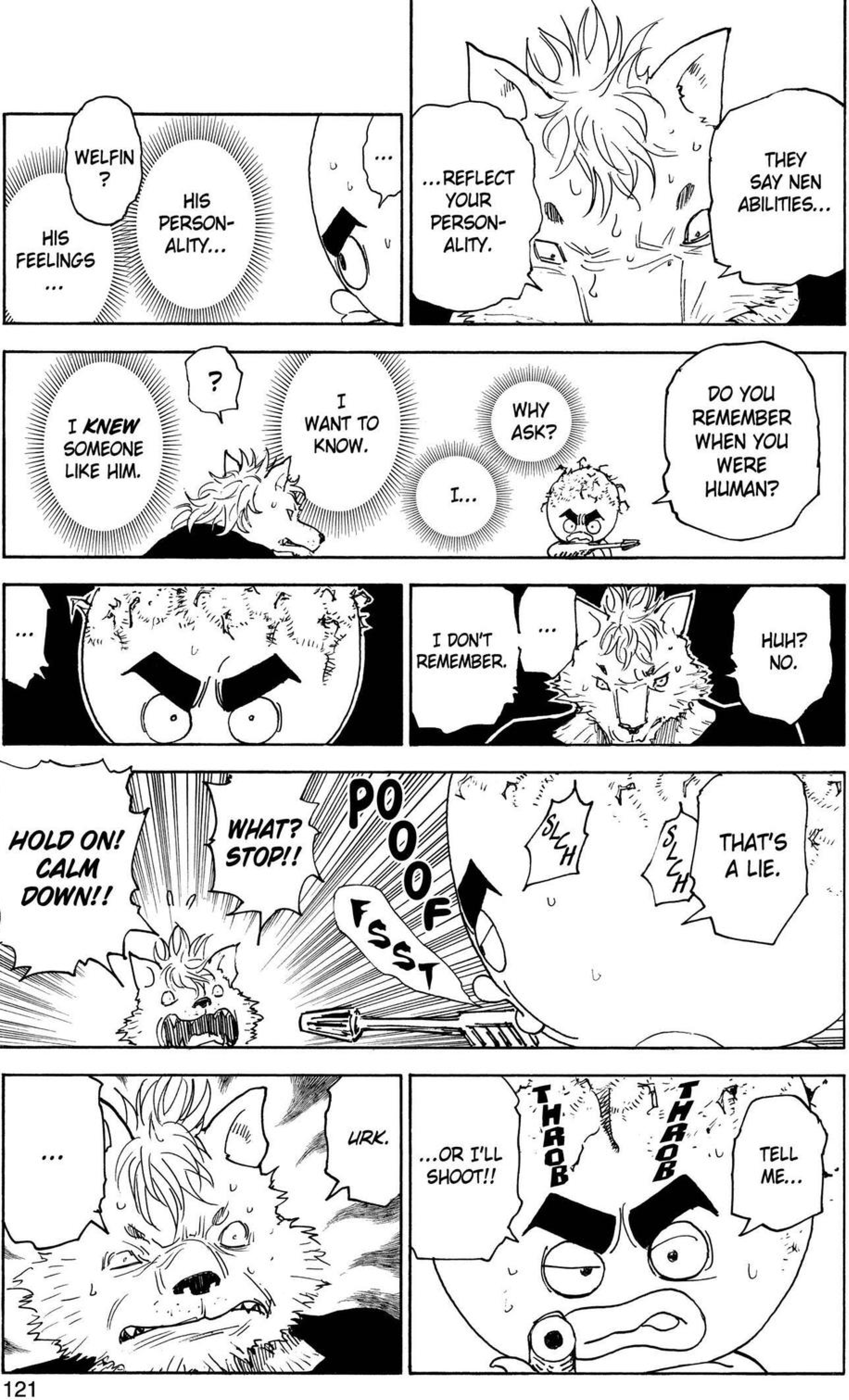

THROB
THROB
THROB
THROB
FSSST
...
STOP!! ALL RIGHT ALREADY!!
I WON'T MOVE!! I SURRENDER!! PLEASE DON'T SHOOT MEEE!!
KEEE
KEEE
...?

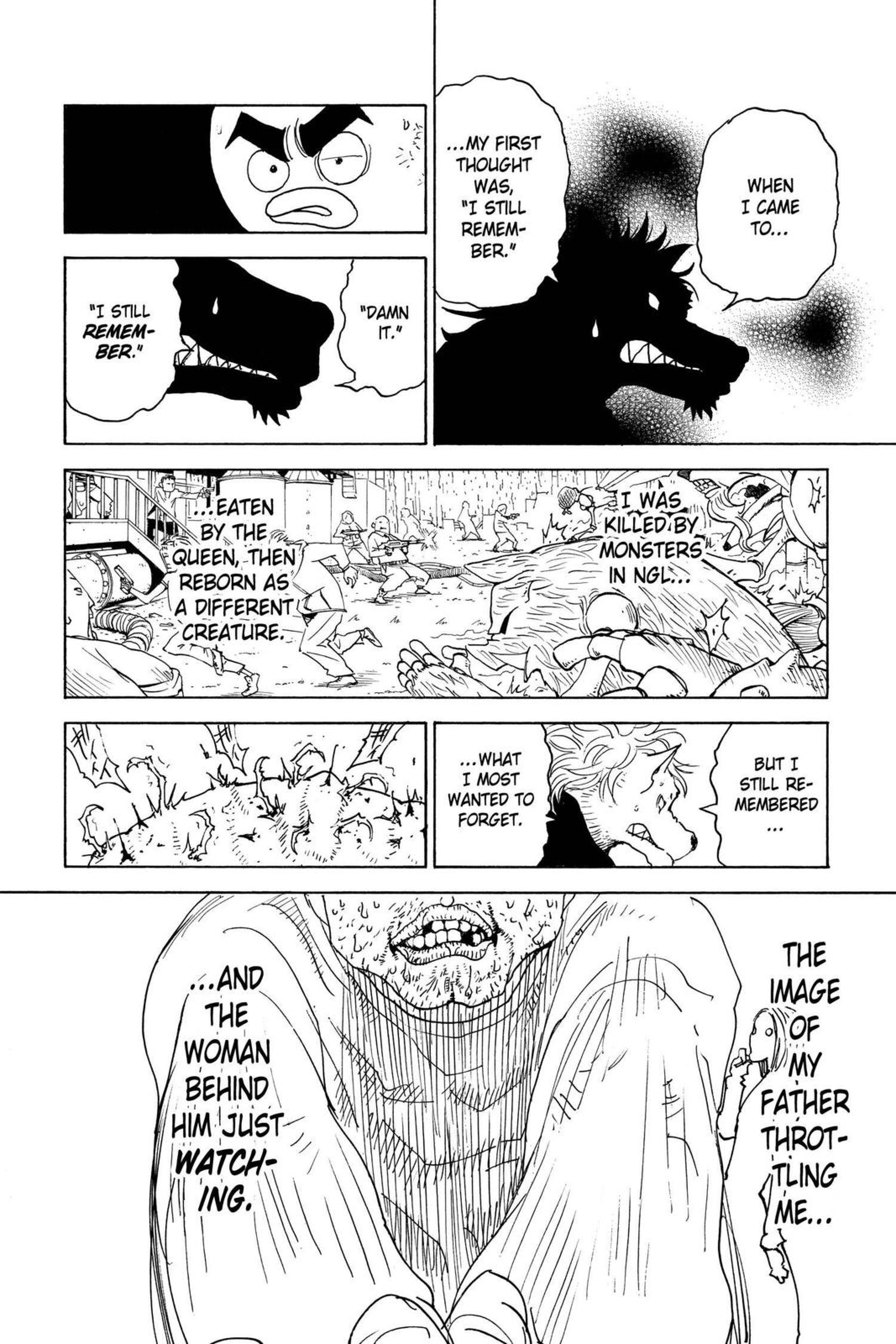

KEE
KEE
KEE
LESS PAIN…
NOW THE **CREATURES** ARE IN AGONY!
I CAN'T MOVE ANYMORE… I LOSE, OKAY?
DAMMIT… I ***KNEW*** THIS WOULD HAPPEN SOMEDAY…
IS IT BECAUSE…
…WELFIN ADMITTED DEFEAT?
I NEVER REALIZED HOW DANGEROUS PEOPLE CAN BE…
…WHEN THEY DISREGARD THEIR OWN SAFETY!!
…
HEY…
WHAT?
THE PAIN'S BETTER NOW…
…BUT CAN YOU GET THESE THINGS OUT?
SHUT UP.
…
I'M SUFFERING TOO MUCH TO WORRY ABOUT ***YOU.***

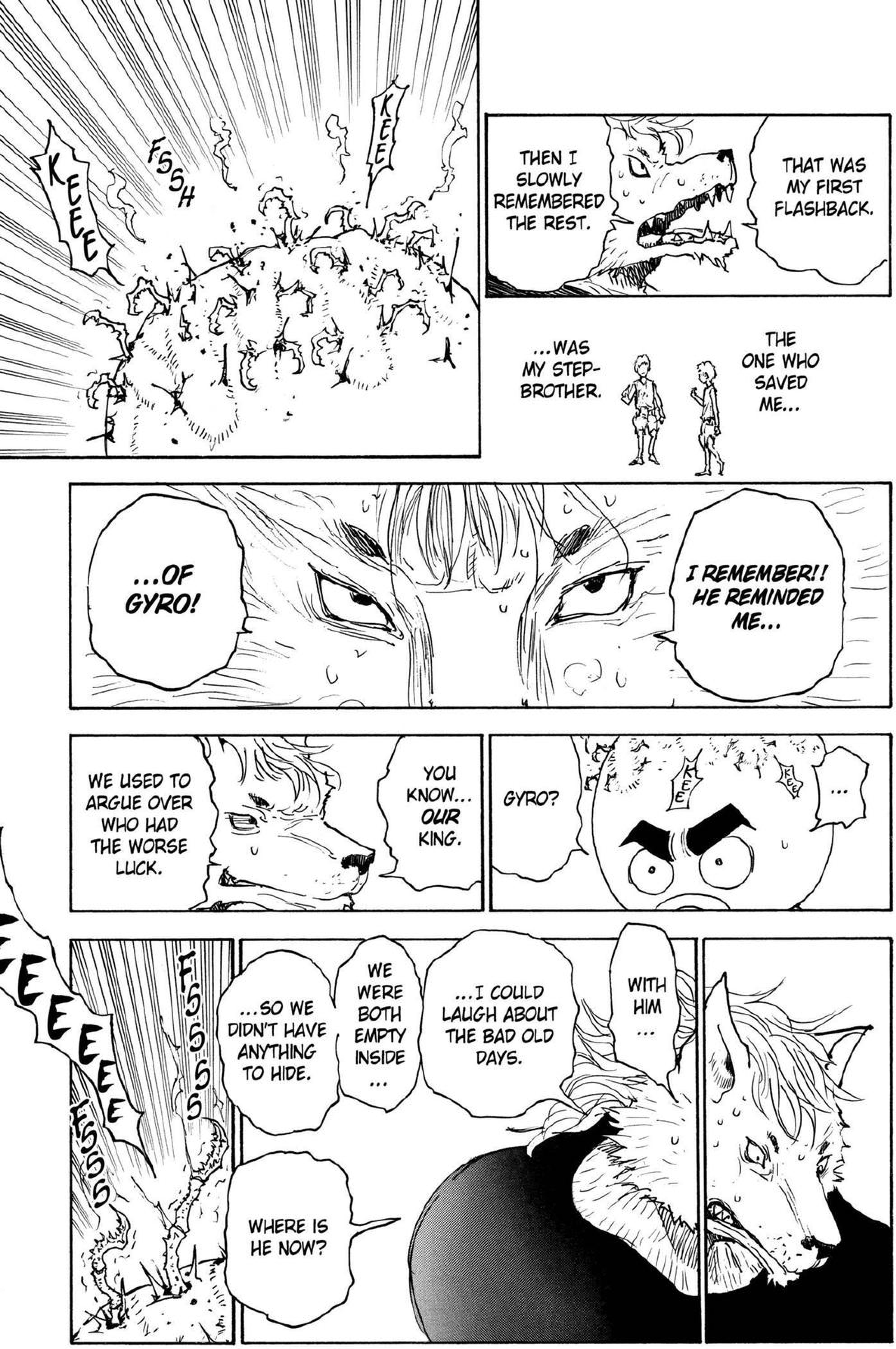
READ THIS WAY

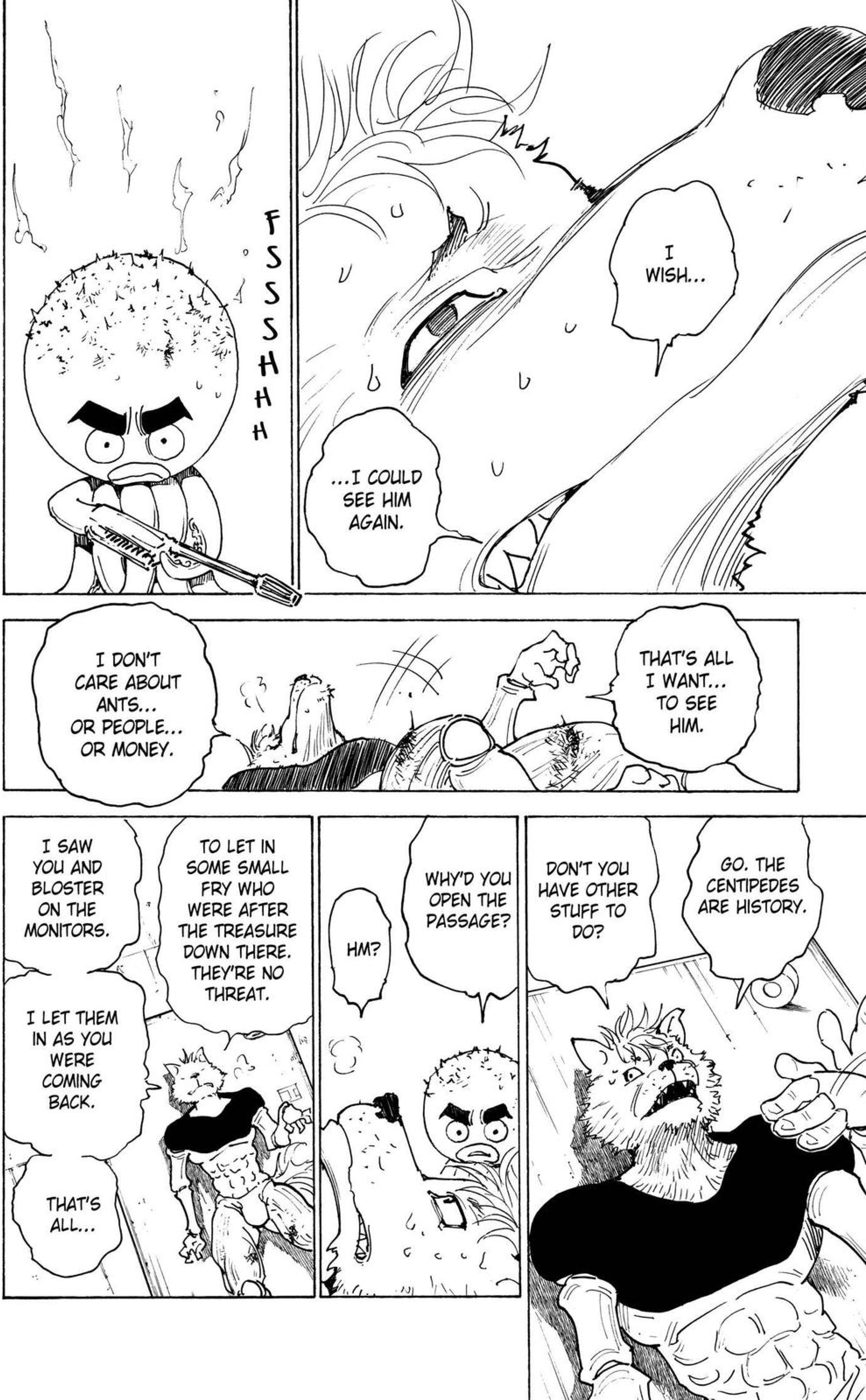

THERE'S NO WAY TO DISABLE MISSILE MAN!!
BUT TELLING HIM THAT WOULD BE SUICIDE! HOW DO I GET OUTTA THIS ONE?
WAIT...
HOLD ON...
BUY TIME.
VISION...
UNTIL I GET A BETTER IDEA.
... FADING ...
SLUMP
...
...
CHK
URK
...
...
SHP
WHOA!! WAIT!!
JUST KIDDING!! I WON'T DO IT AGAIN!!


THEN GET 'EM OUTTA ME!!
URK!
WELL, UM... UH...
TIME'S UP!!
POOF
WHOA, WAIT!!
I *CAN'T* UNDO IT!! ONCE I FIRE, THAT'S IT!! THAT'S WHY I DIDN'T WANT TO TELL YOU!
IT'S THE TRUTH!! YOU GOTTA BELIEVE ME!! I'M NOT TRYING TO TRICK YOU!!
KEE
KEE
REACTING TO WELFIN'S CONFESSION...
AGAIN... THEY'RE IN PAIN...
WHAT DID YOU EXPECT? I ATTACK TO *KILL.*
HF
HF
LIKE I CARE WHAT HAPPENS TO THEM AFTERWARDS!

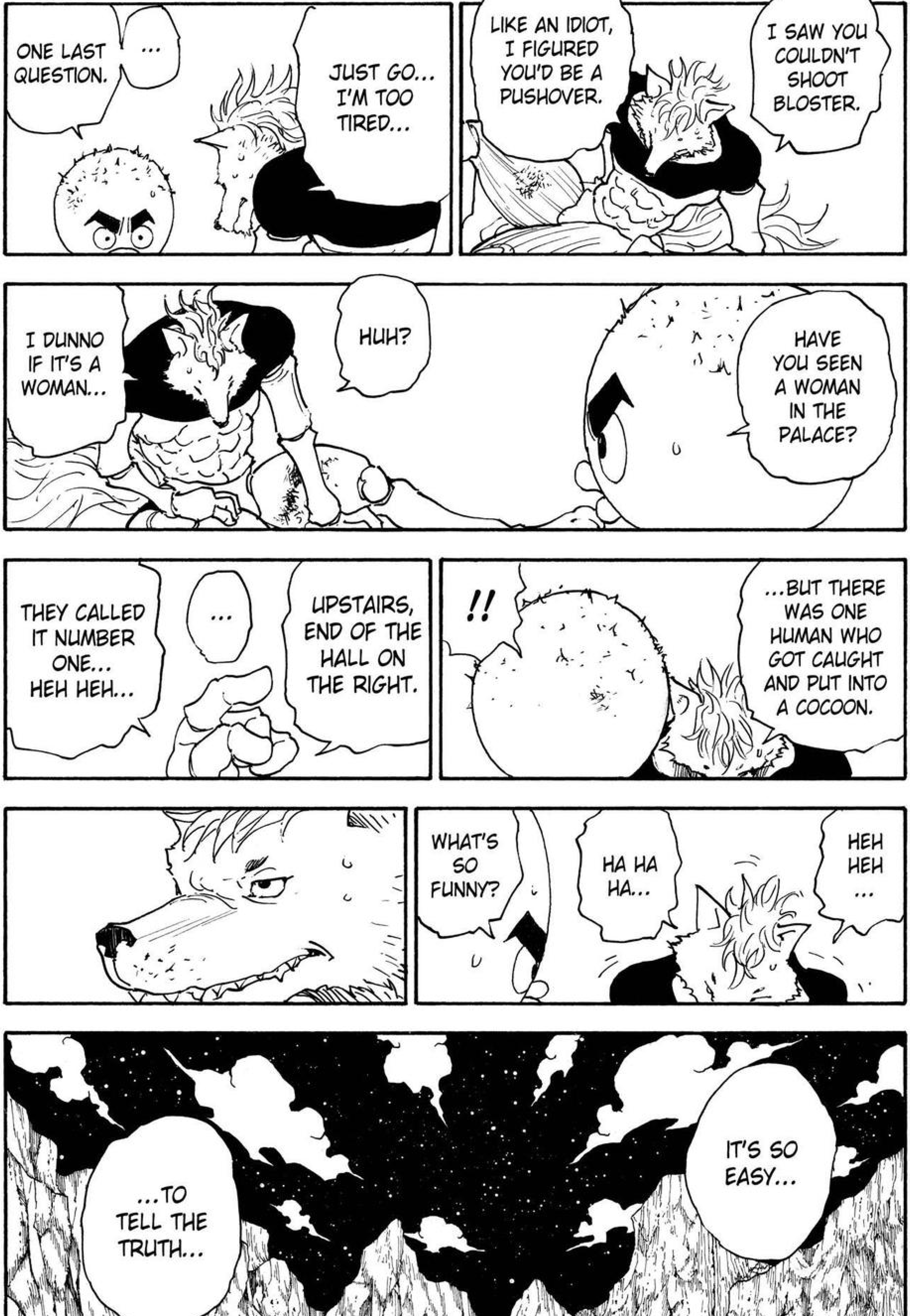

THEY SAY NEN ABILITIES...
...REFLECT YOUR PERSONALITY.
...
WELFIN?
HIS PERSONALITY...
HIS FEELINGS...
DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN YOU WERE HUMAN?
WHY ASK?
I...
I WANT TO KNOW.
?
I *KNEW* SOMEONE LIKE HIM.
HUH? NO.
...
I DON'T REMEMBER.
...
THAT'S A LIE.
SLCH
SLCH
POOOF
FSSST
WHAT? STOP!!
HOLD ON! CALM DOWN!!
TELL ME...
THROB
THROB
...OR I'LL SHOOT!!
URK.
...

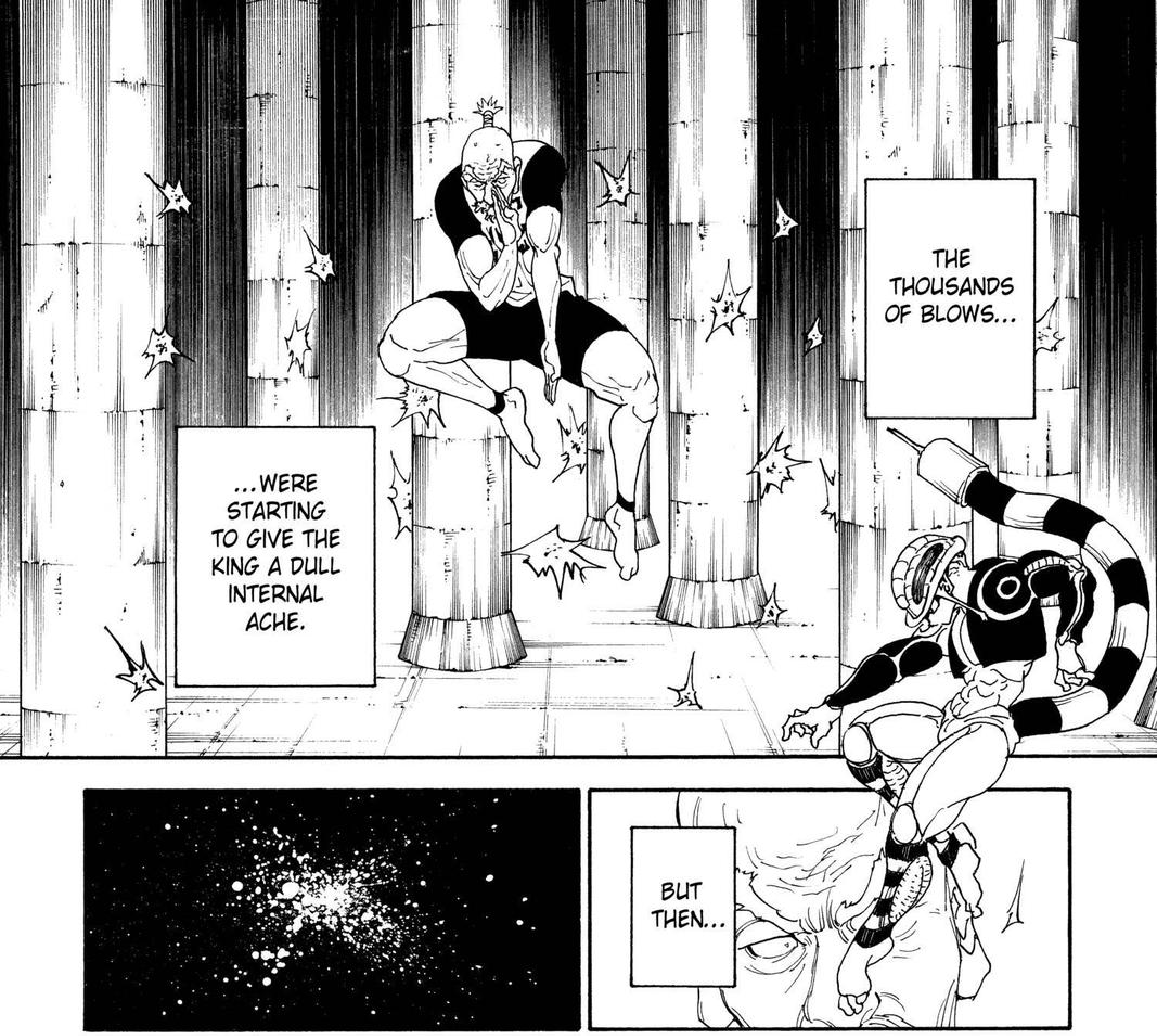

WHEN I CAME TO...
...MY FIRST THOUGHT WAS, "I STILL REMEMBER."
"DAMN IT."
"I STILL *REMEMBER.*"
I WAS KILLED BY MONSTERS IN NGL...
...EATEN BY THE QUEEN, THEN REBORN AS A DIFFERENT CREATURE.
BUT I STILL REMEMBERED ...
...WHAT I MOST WANTED TO FORGET.
THE IMAGE OF MY FATHER THROTTLING ME...
...AND THE WOMAN BEHIND HIM JUST *WATCHING.*

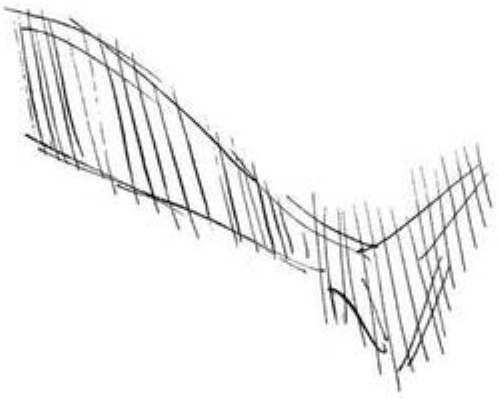

THAT WAS MY FIRST FLASHBACK.
THEN I SLOWLY REMEMBERED THE REST.
THE ONE WHO SAVED ME…
…WAS MY STEP-BROTHER.
KEE
FSSH
KEEE
I REMEMBER!! HE REMINDED ME…
…OF GYRO!
…
KEE
KEE
GYRO?
YOU KNOW… OUR KING.
WE USED TO ARGUE OVER WHO HAD THE WORSE LUCK.
WITH HIM…
…I COULD LAUGH ABOUT THE BAD OLD DAYS.
WE WERE BOTH EMPTY INSIDE…
…SO WE DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO HIDE.
WHERE IS HE NOW?
FSSSS
EEEEEE
ESSS

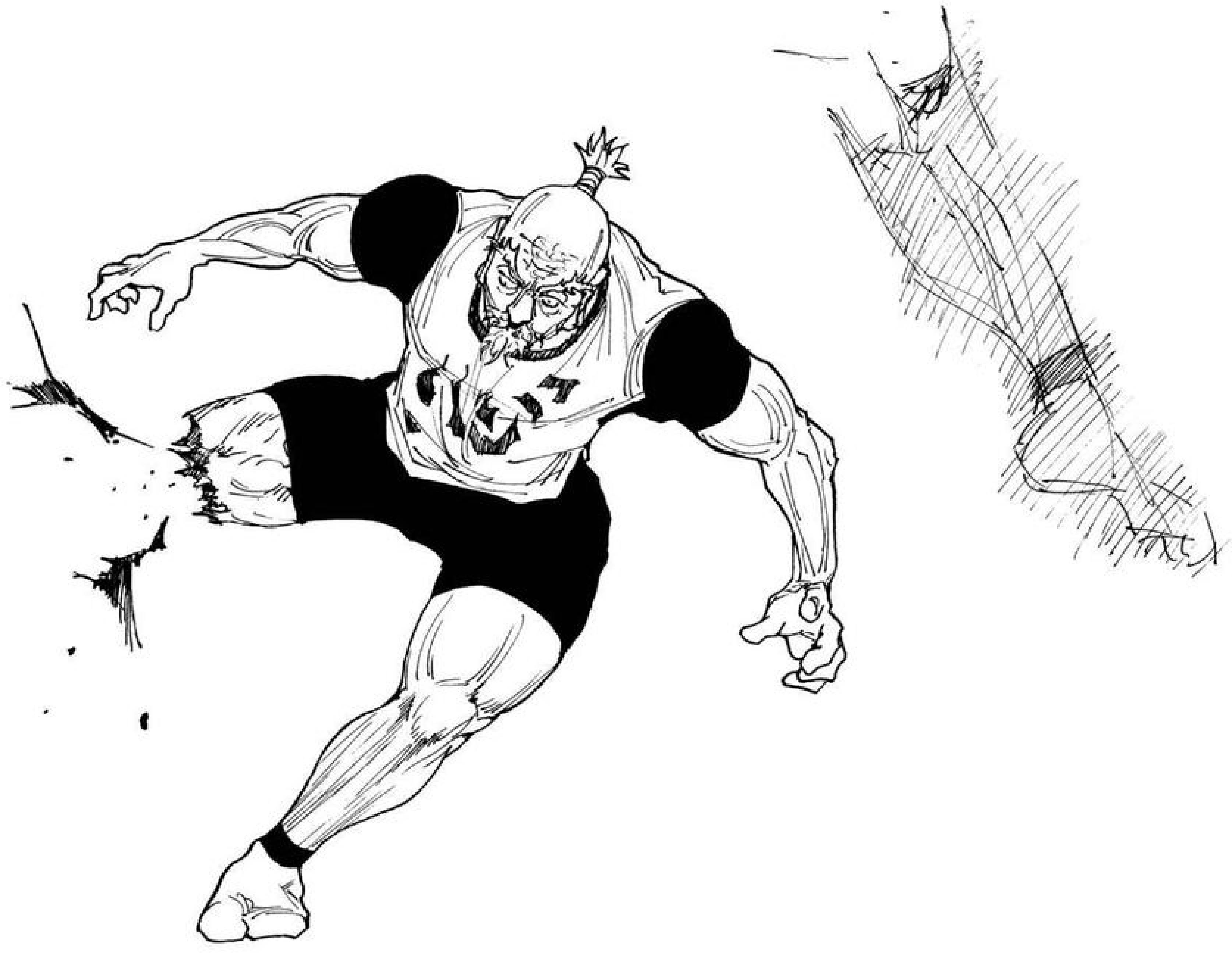

I WISH...
...I COULD SEE HIM AGAIN.
FSSSHHH
THAT'S ALL I WANT... TO SEE HIM.
I DON'T CARE ABOUT ANTS... OR PEOPLE... OR MONEY.
GO. THE CENTIPEDES ARE HISTORY.
DON'T YOU HAVE OTHER STUFF TO DO?
WHY'D YOU OPEN THE PASSAGE?
HM?
TO LET IN SOME SMALL FRY WHO WERE AFTER THE TREASURE DOWN THERE. THEY'RE NO THREAT.
I SAW YOU AND BLOSTER ON THE MONITORS.
I LET THEM IN AS YOU WERE COMING BACK.
THAT'S ALL...

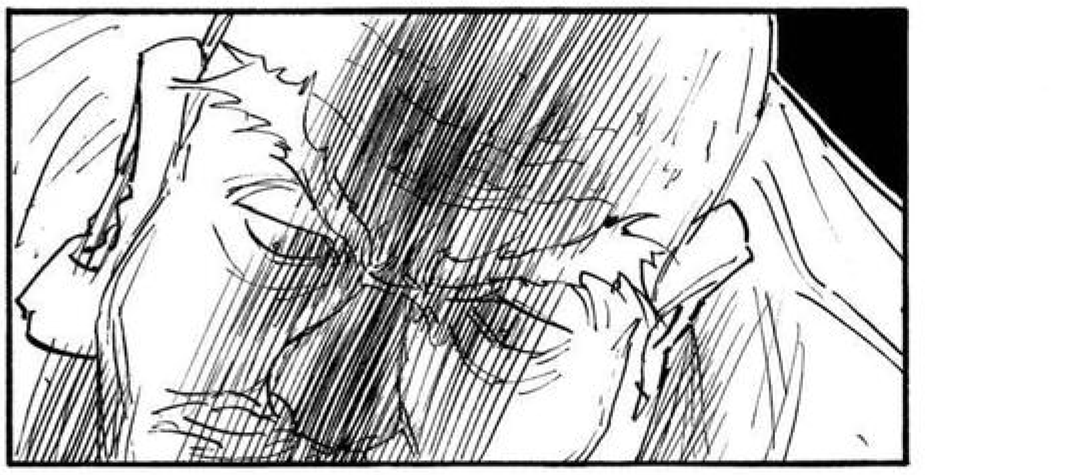
READ THIS WAY

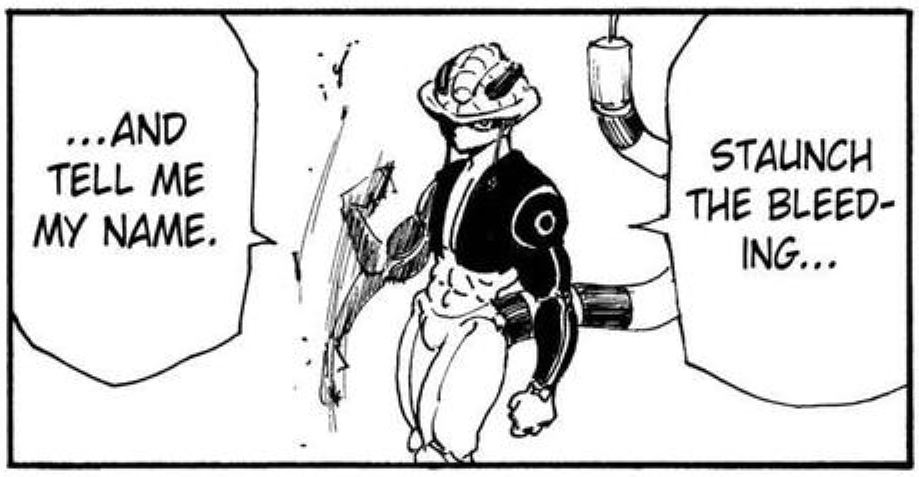

I SAW YOU COULDN'T SHOOT BLOSTER.
LIKE AN IDIOT, I FIGURED YOU'D BE A PUSHOVER.
JUST GO... I'M TOO TIRED...
...
ONE LAST QUESTION.
HAVE YOU SEEN A WOMAN IN THE PALACE?
HUH?
I DUNNO IF IT'S A WOMAN...
...BUT THERE WAS ONE HUMAN WHO GOT CAUGHT AND PUT INTO A COCOON.
!!
UPSTAIRS, END OF THE HALL ON THE RIGHT.
...
THEY CALLED IT NUMBER ONE... HEH HEH...
HEH HEH ...
HA HA HA...
WHAT'S SO FUNNY?
IT'S SO EASY...
...TO TELL THE TRUTH...

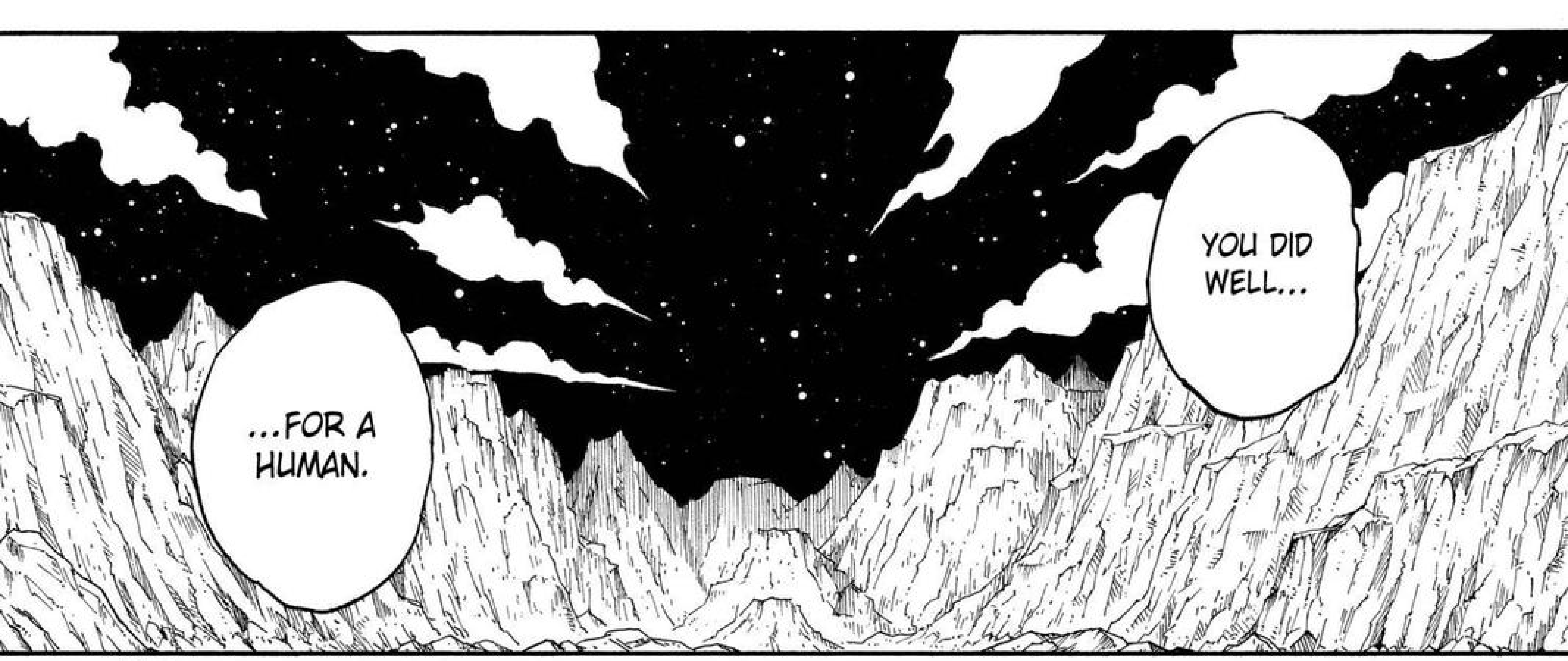

THE THOUSANDS OF BLOWS...
...WERE STARTING TO GIVE THE KING A DULL INTERNAL ACHE.
BUT THEN...



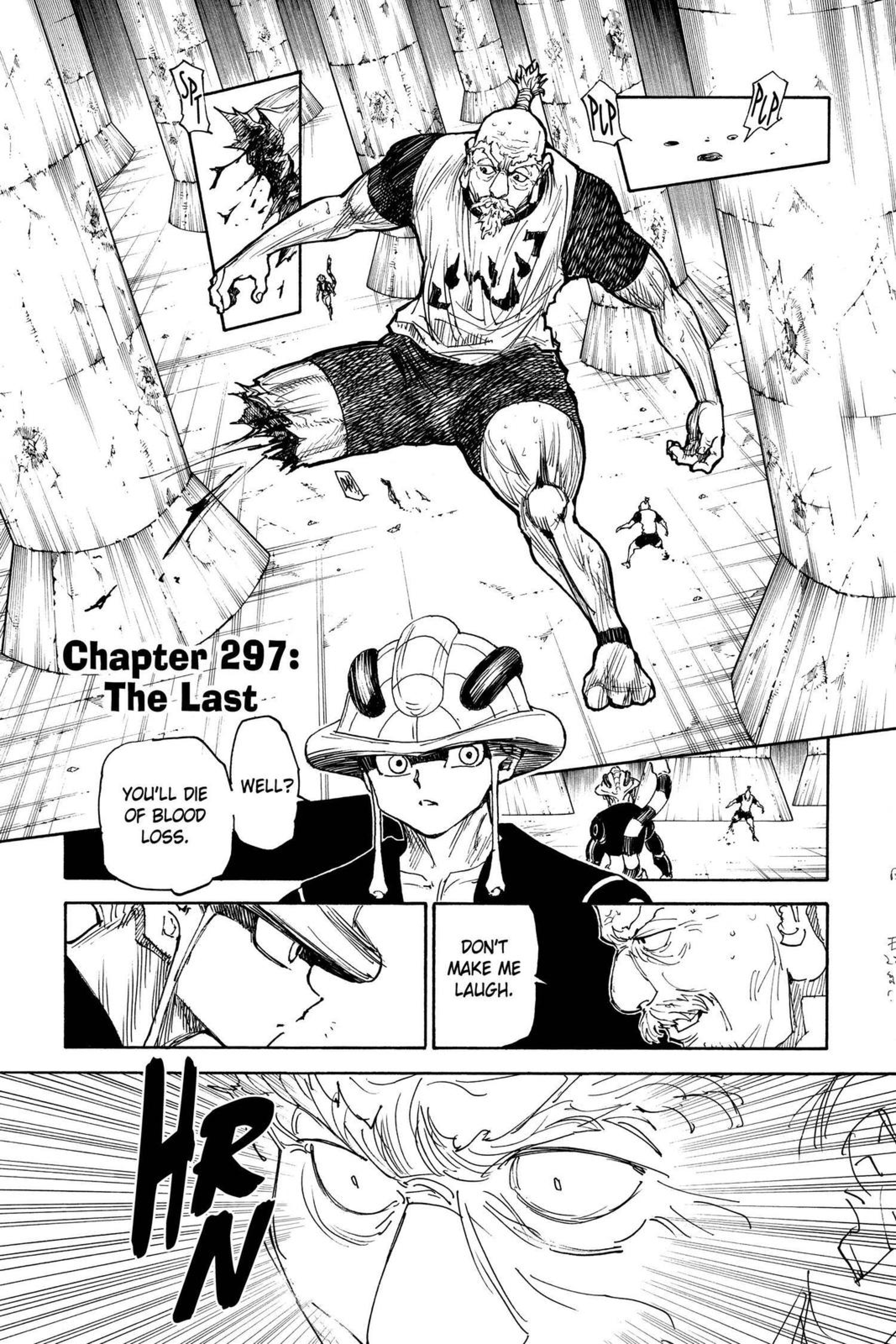


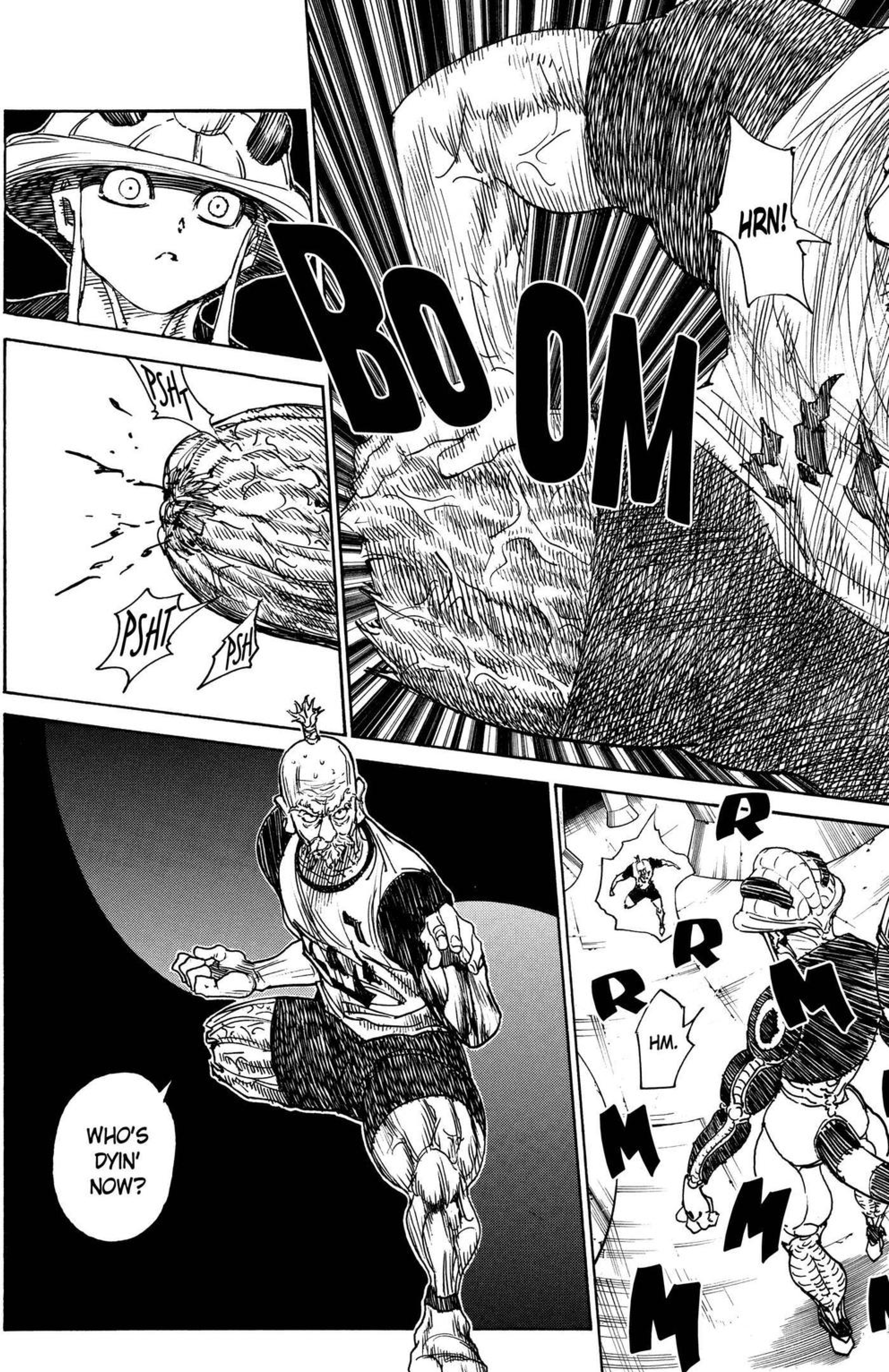



STAUNCH THE BLEED-ING...
...AND TELL ME MY NAME.

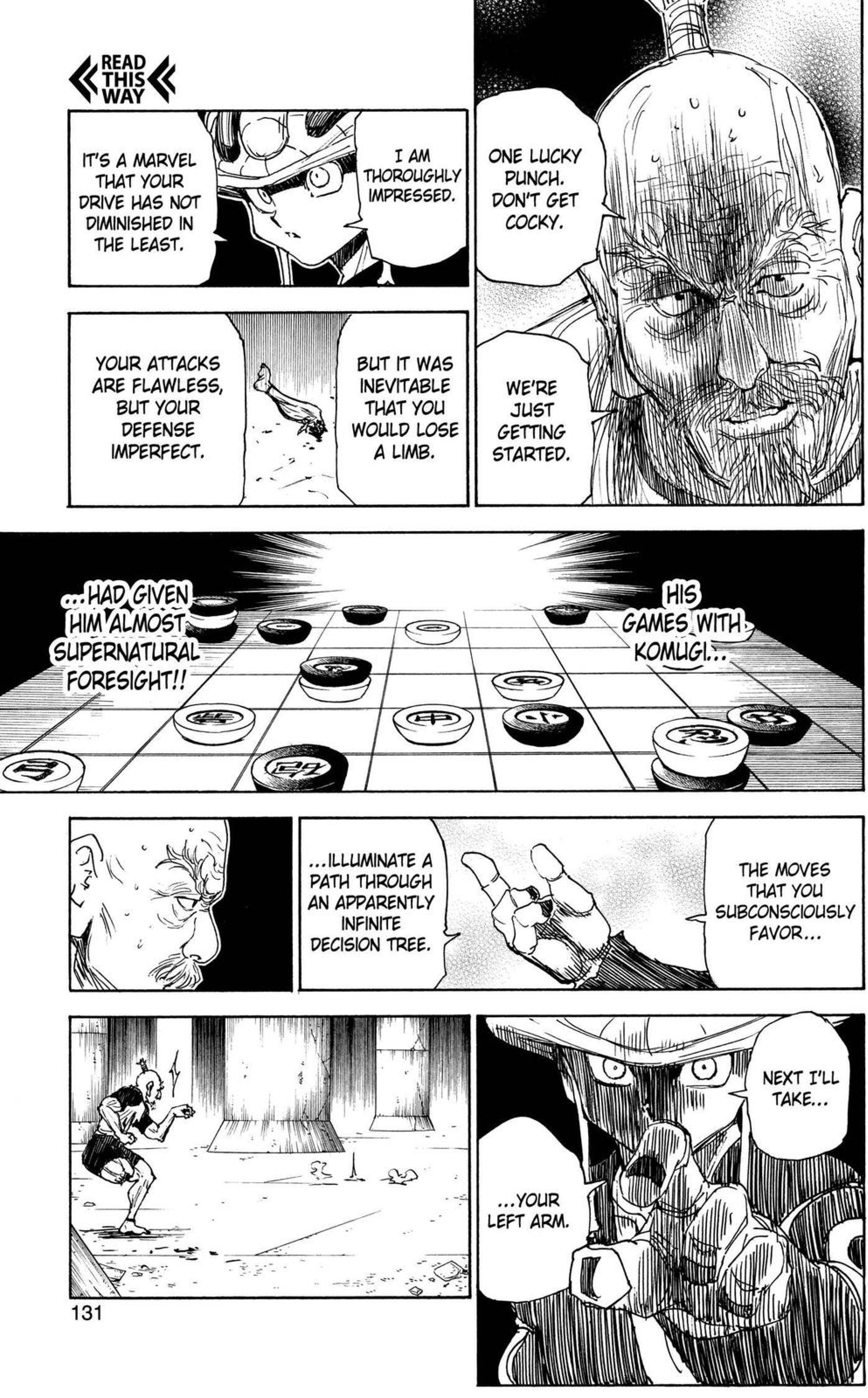

YOU DID WELL...
...FOR A HUMAN.

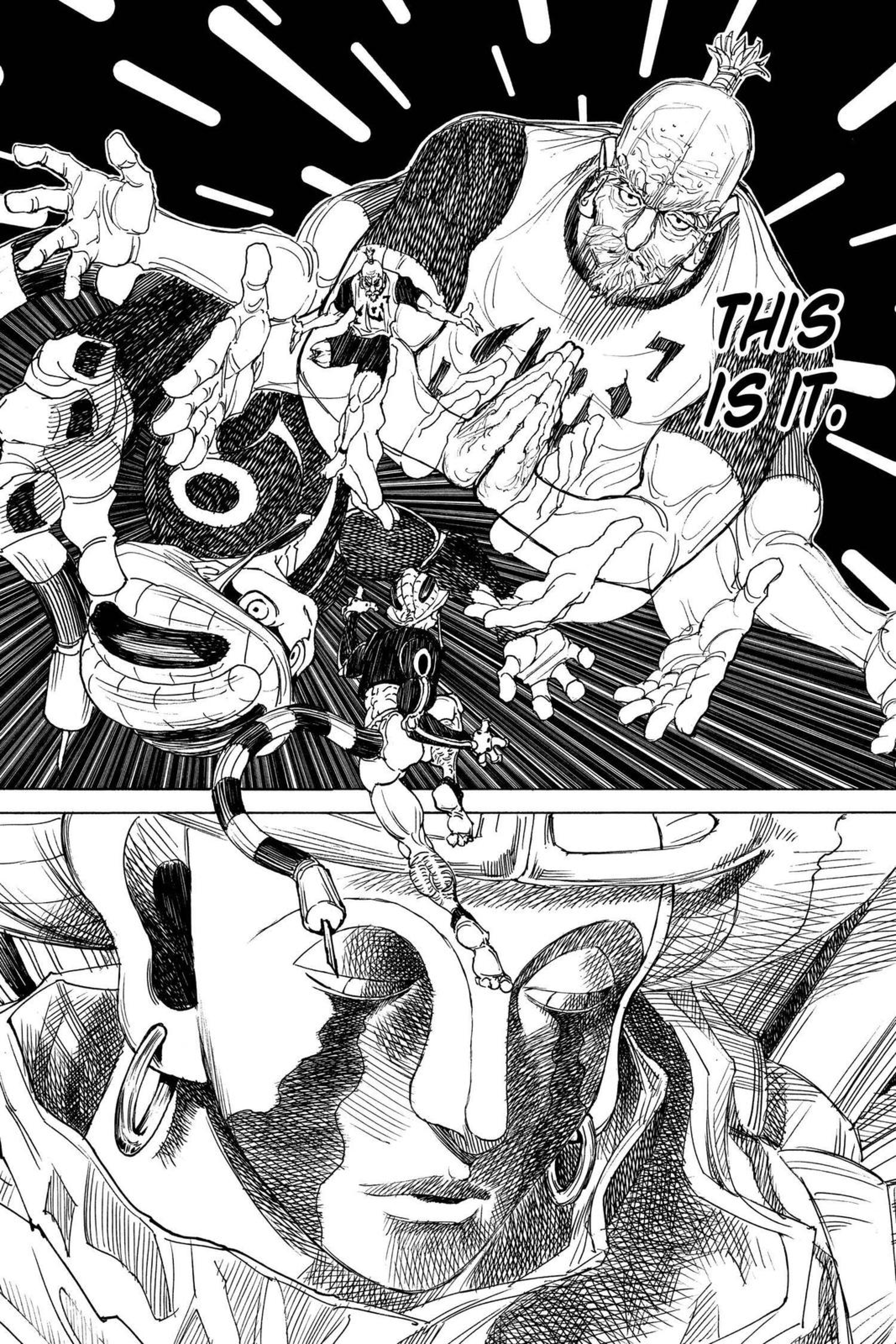
Chapter 297: The Last

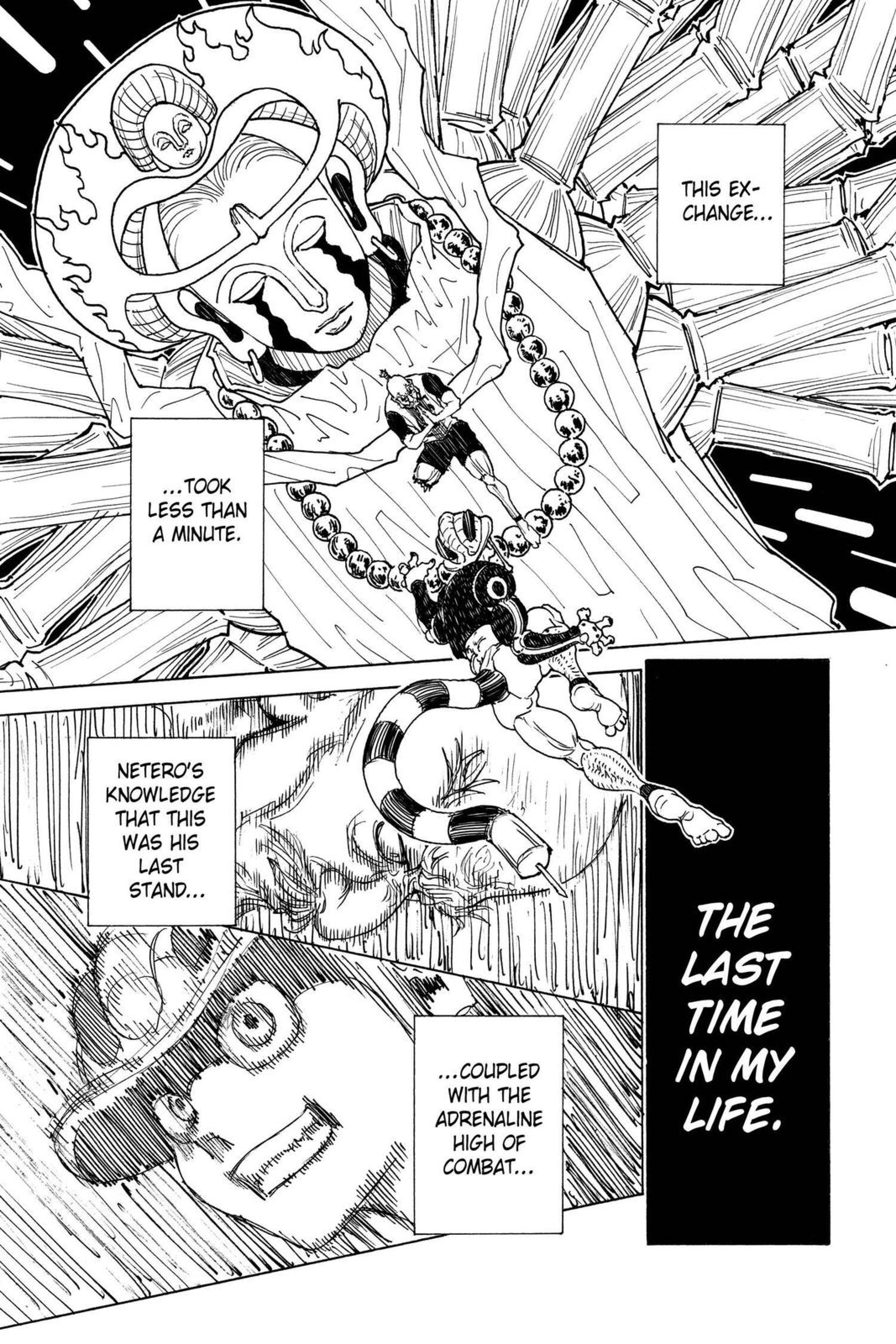

PLP
PLP
SPT
WELL?
YOU'LL DIE OF BLOOD LOSS.
DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH.
HRN

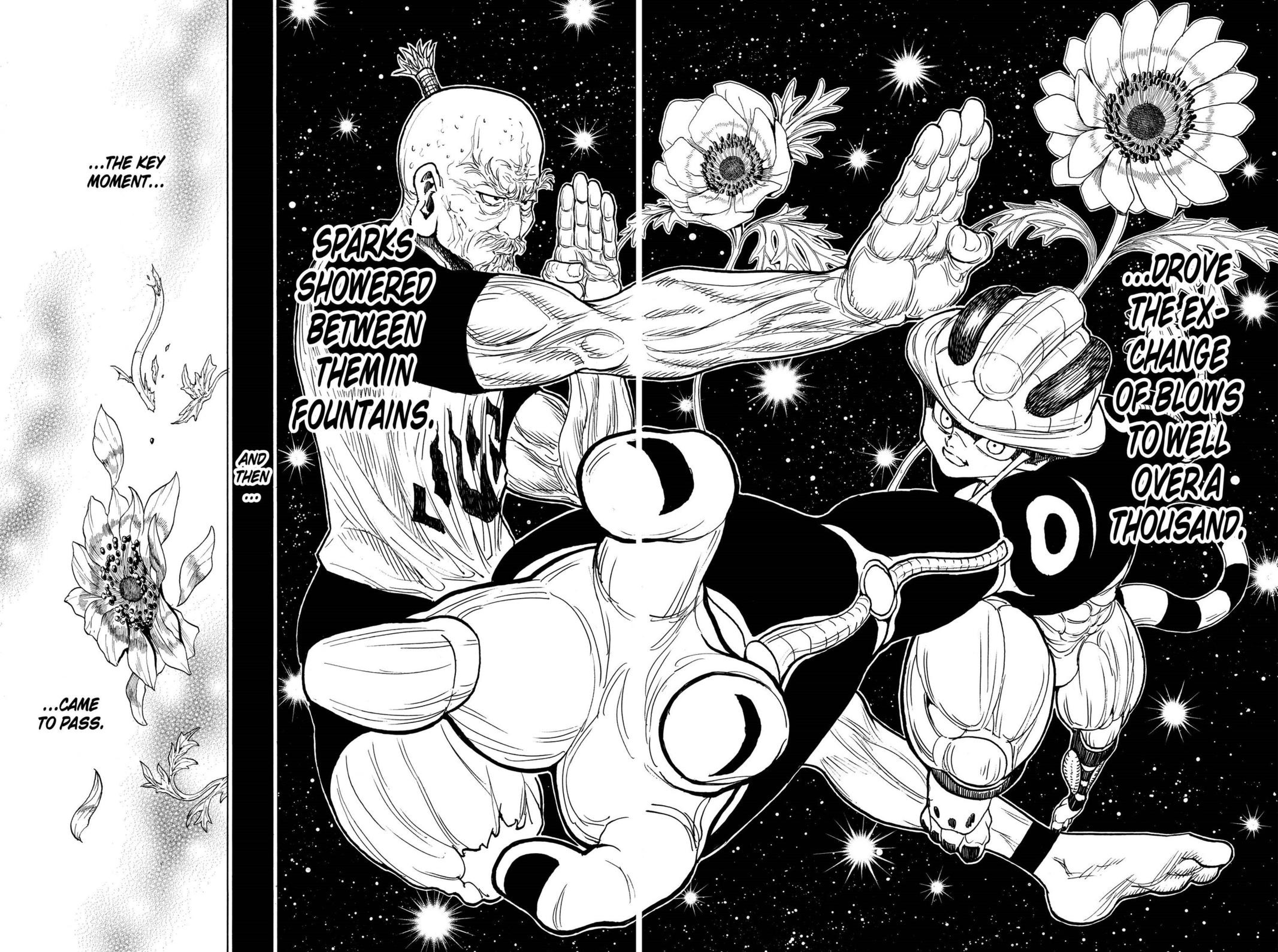

HRN!
BOOM
PSHT
PSHT
PSH
RRRRMMMMMM
HM.
WHO'S DYIN' NOW?

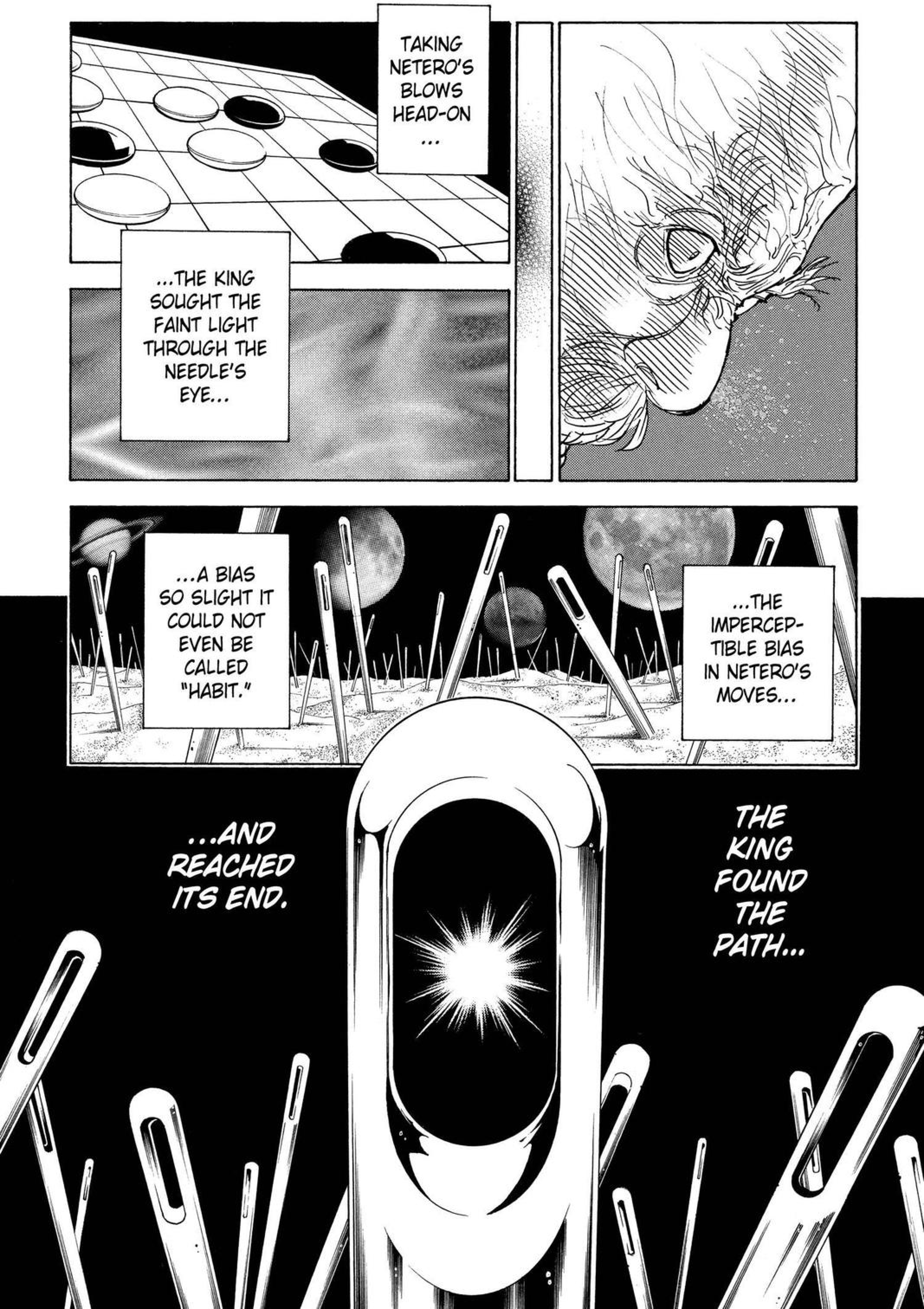
READ THIS WAY

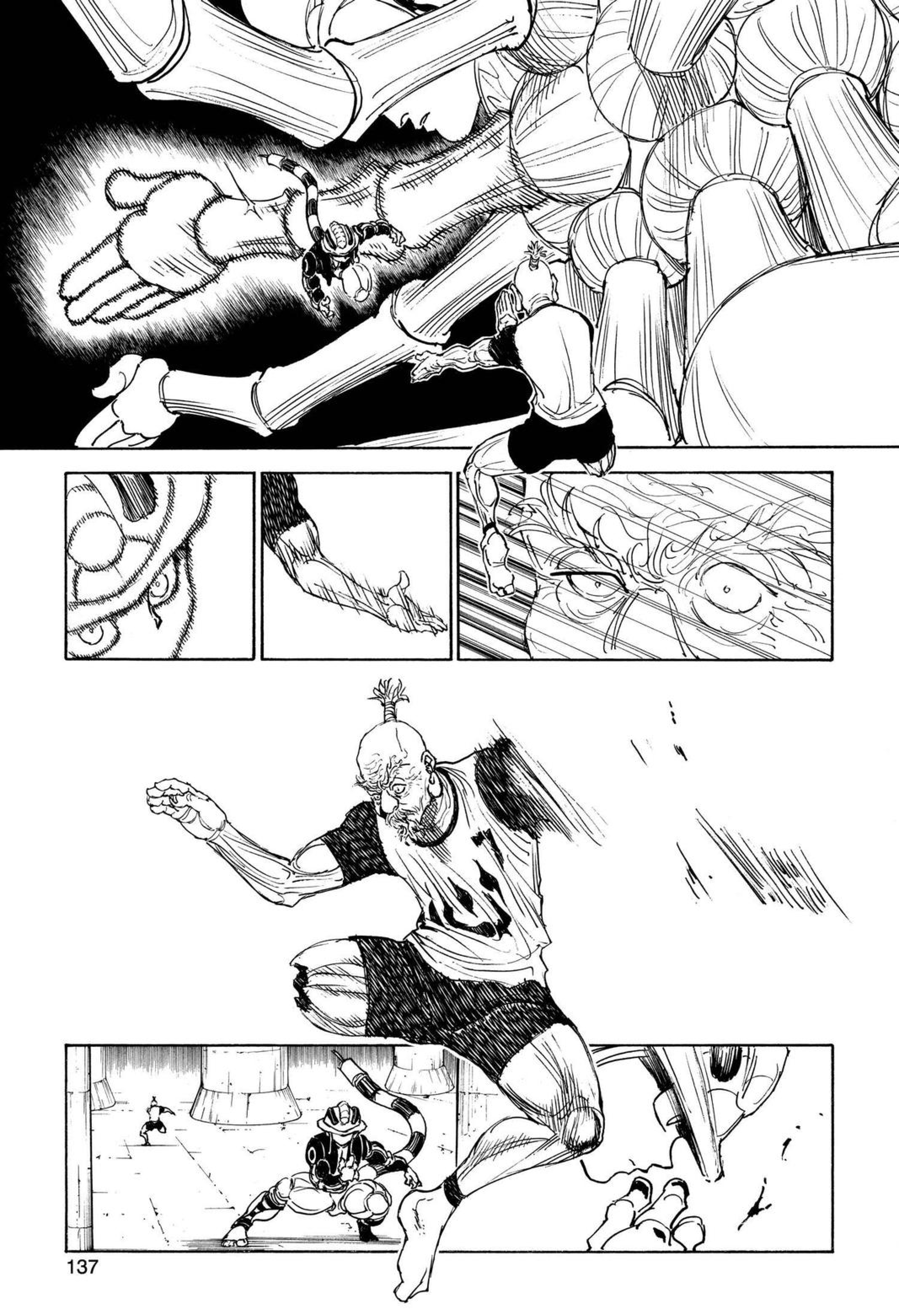

I AM THOROUGHLY IMPRESSED.
IT'S A MARVEL THAT YOUR DRIVE HAS NOT DIMINISHED IN THE LEAST.
BUT IT WAS INEVITABLE THAT YOU WOULD LOSE A LIMB.
YOUR ATTACKS ARE FLAWLESS, BUT YOUR DEFENSE IMPERFECT.
ONE LUCKY PUNCH. DON'T GET COCKY.
WE'RE JUST GETTING STARTED.
HIS GAMES WITH KOMUGI...
...HAD GIVEN HIM ALMOST SUPERNATURAL FORESIGHT!!
THE MOVES THAT YOU SUBCONSCIOUSLY FAVOR...
...ILLUMINATE A PATH THROUGH AN APPARENTLY INFINITE DECISION TREE.
NEXT I'LL TAKE...
...YOUR LEFT ARM.

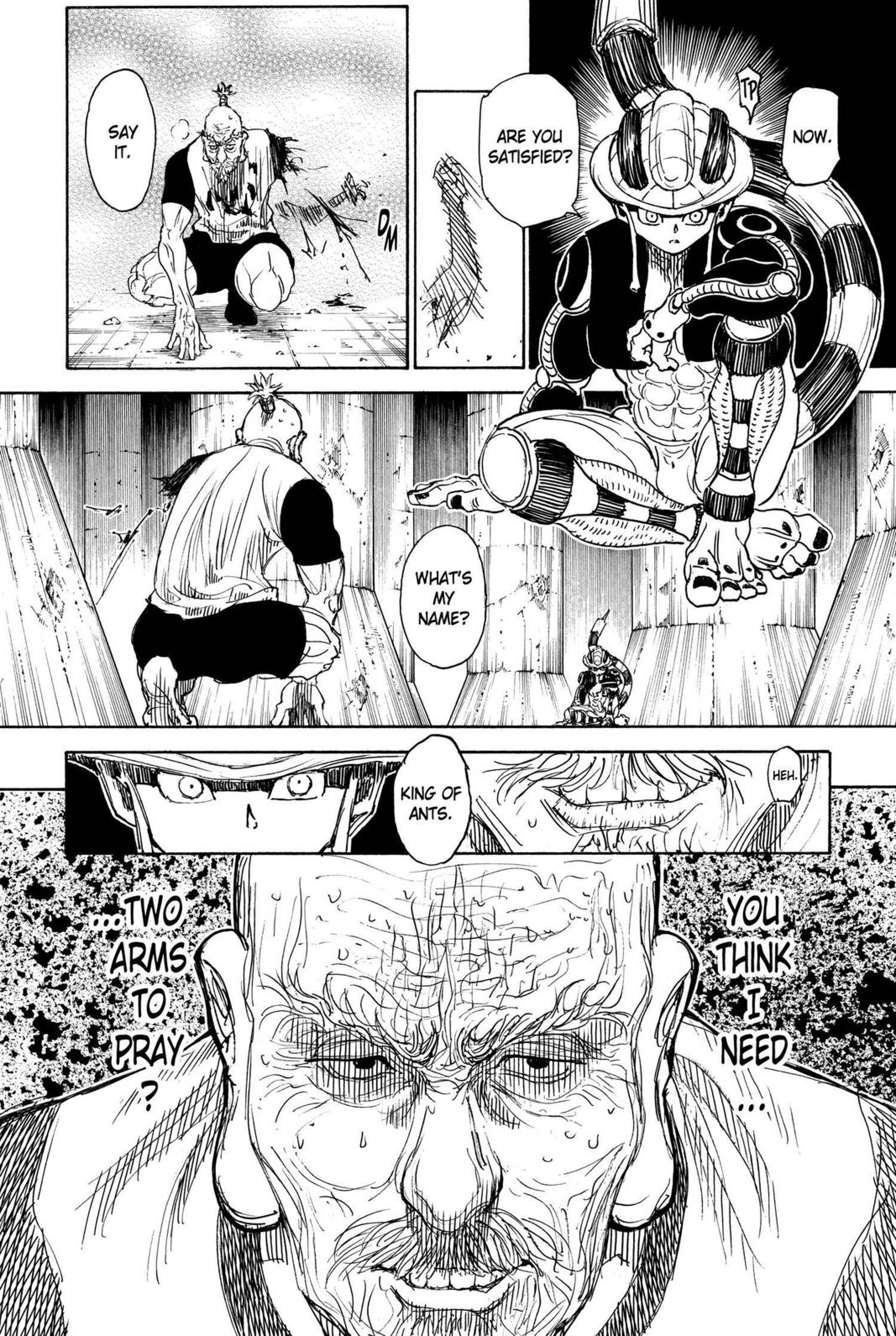

THIS IS IT.

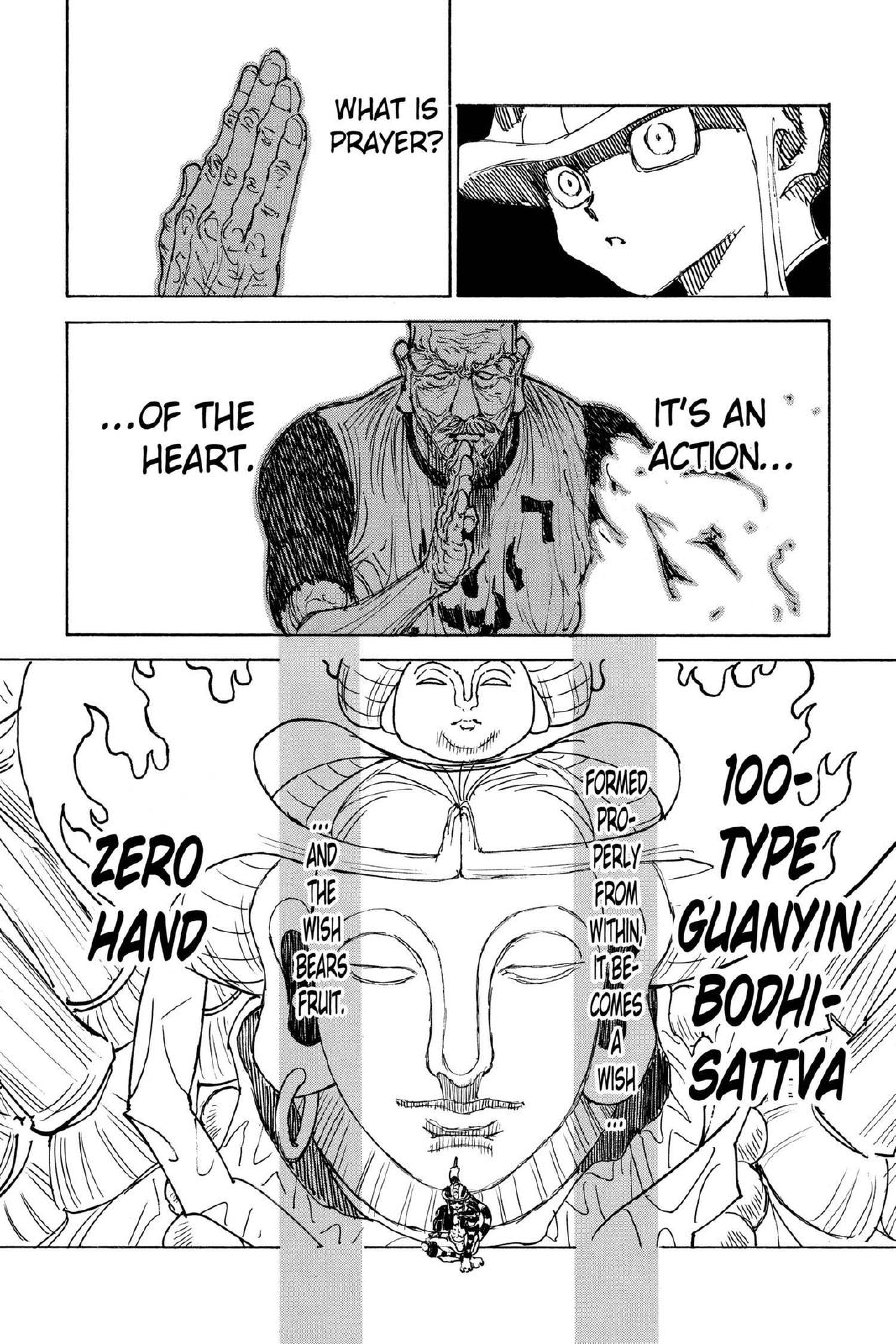

THIS EXCHANGE...
...TOOK LESS THAN A MINUTE.
NETERO'S KNOWLEDGE THAT THIS WAS HIS LAST STAND...
...COUPLED WITH THE ADRENALINE HIGH OF COMBAT...
THE LAST TIME IN MY LIFE.

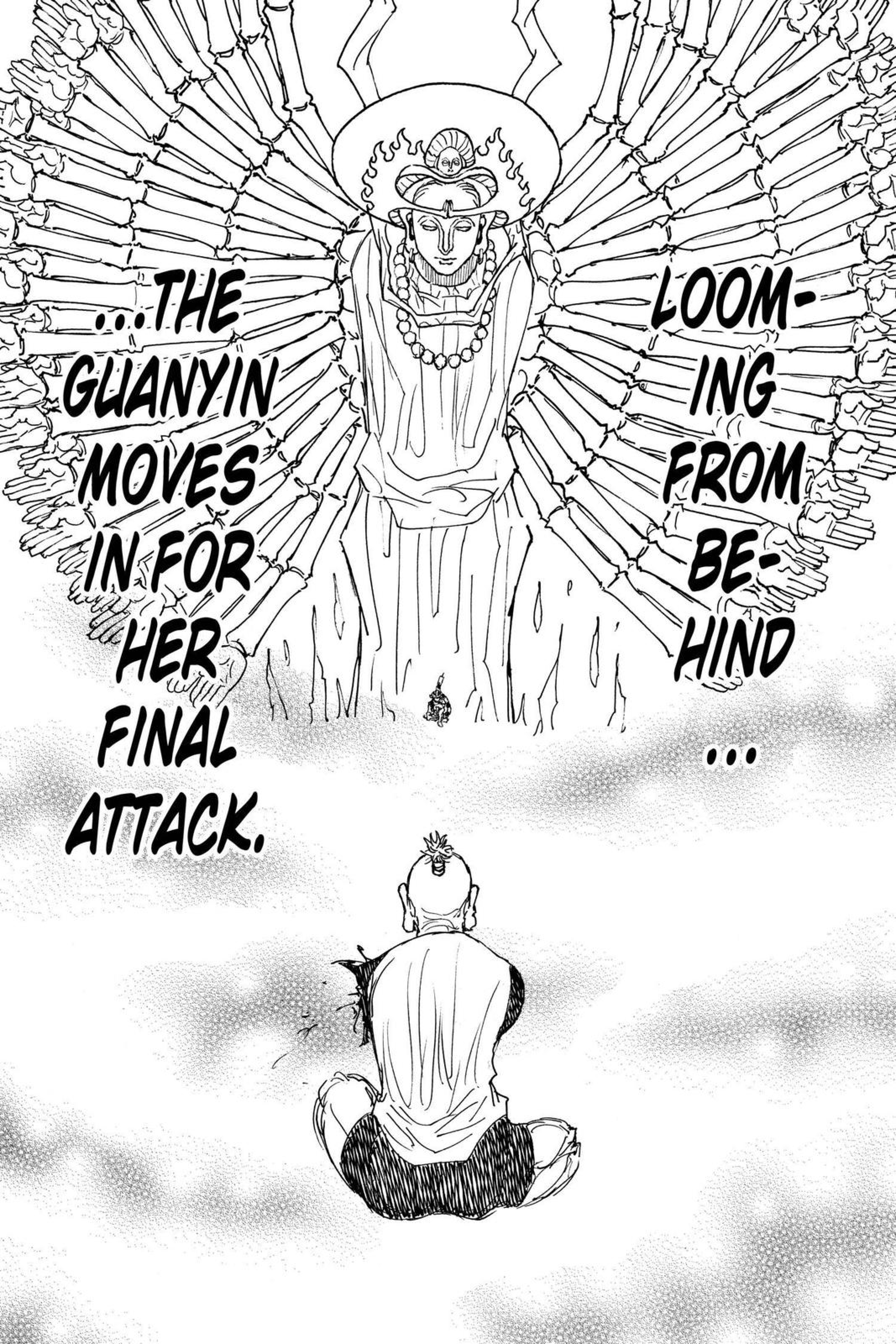

...DROVE THE EXCHANGE OF BLOWS TO WELL OVER A THOUSAND.
SPARKS SHOWERED BETWEEN THEM IN FOUNTAINS.
AND THEN ...
...THE KEY MOMENT...
...CAME TO PASS.

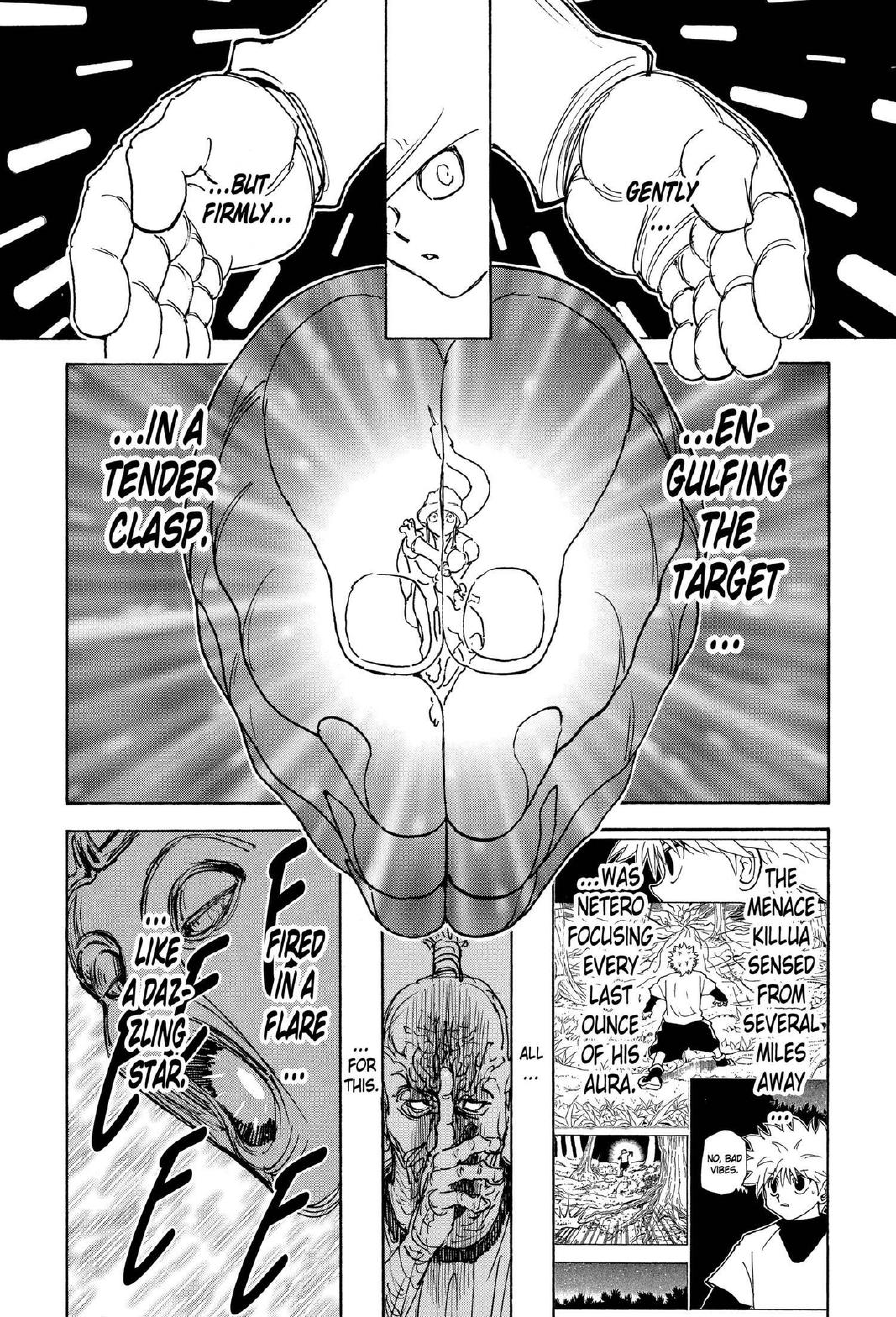

TAKING NETERO'S BLOWS HEAD-ON …
…THE KING SOUGHT THE FAINT LIGHT THROUGH THE NEEDLE'S EYE…
…THE IMPERCEPTIBLE BIAS IN NETERO'S MOVES…
…A BIAS SO SLIGHT IT COULD NOT EVEN BE CALLED "HABIT."
THE KING FOUND THE PATH…
…AND REACHED ITS END.

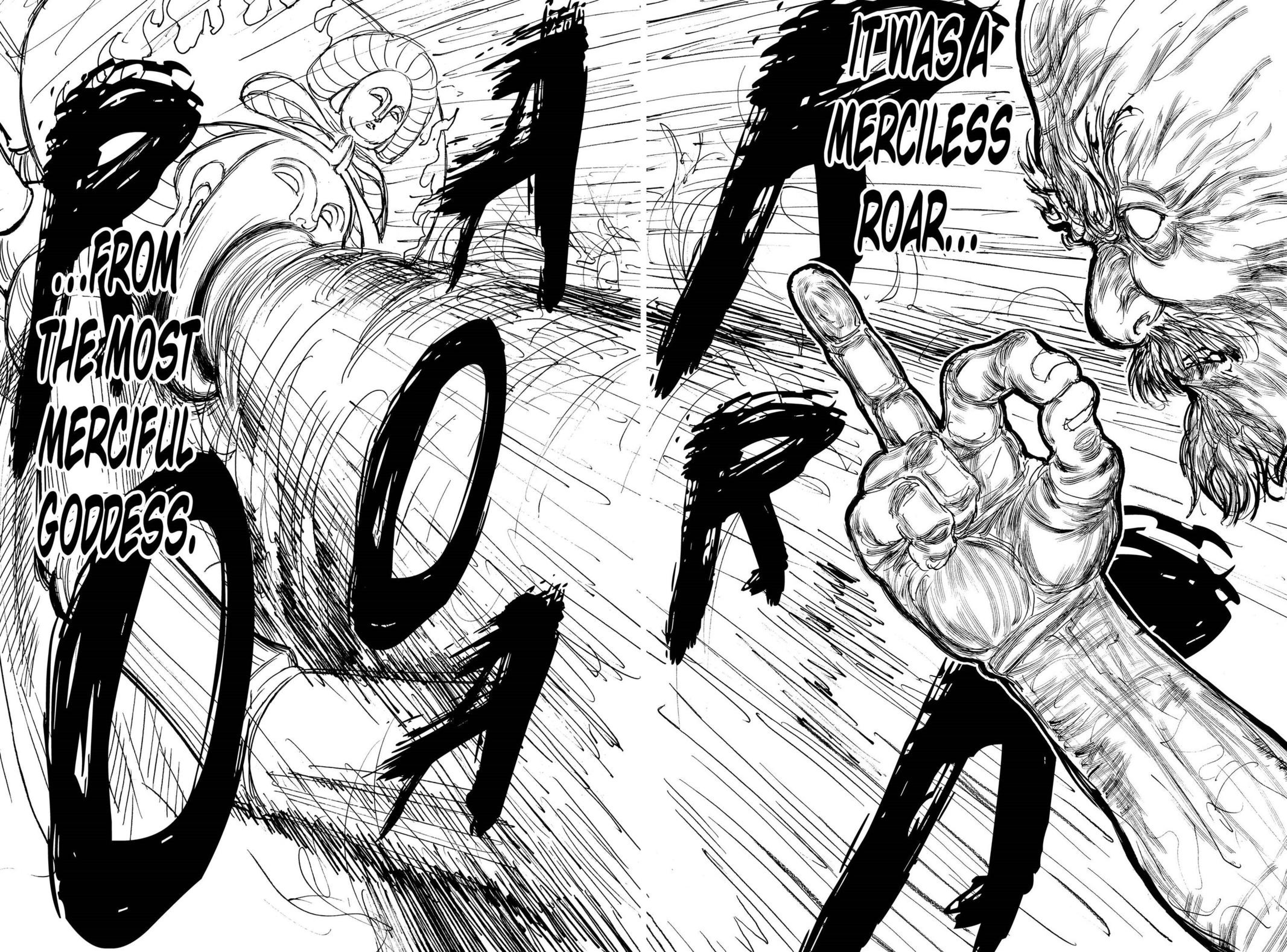


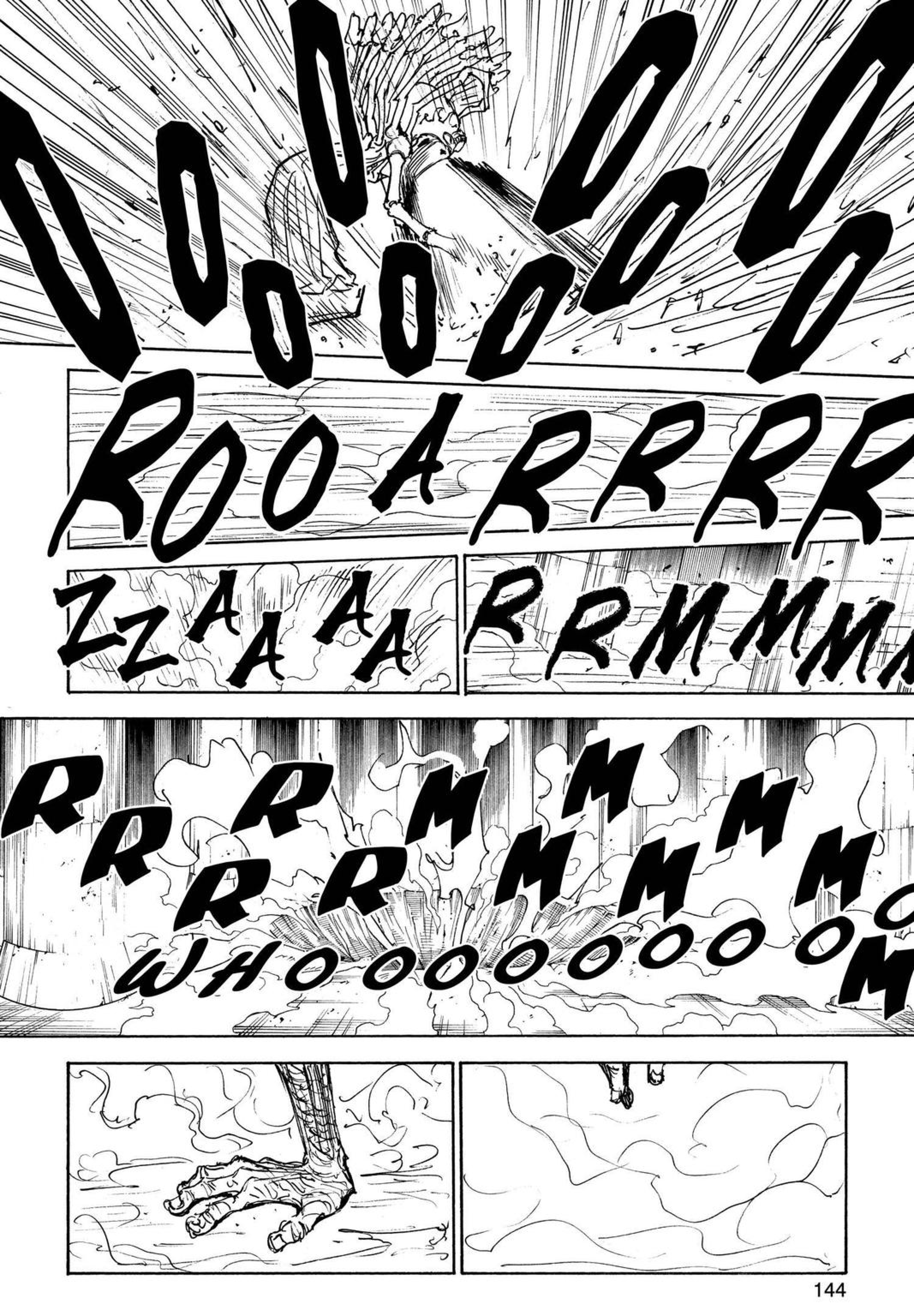

TP
NOW.
ARE YOU SATISFIED?
DM
SAY IT.
WHAT'S MY NAME?
HEH.
KING OF ANTS.
YOU THINK I NEED…
…TWO ARMS TO PRAY?

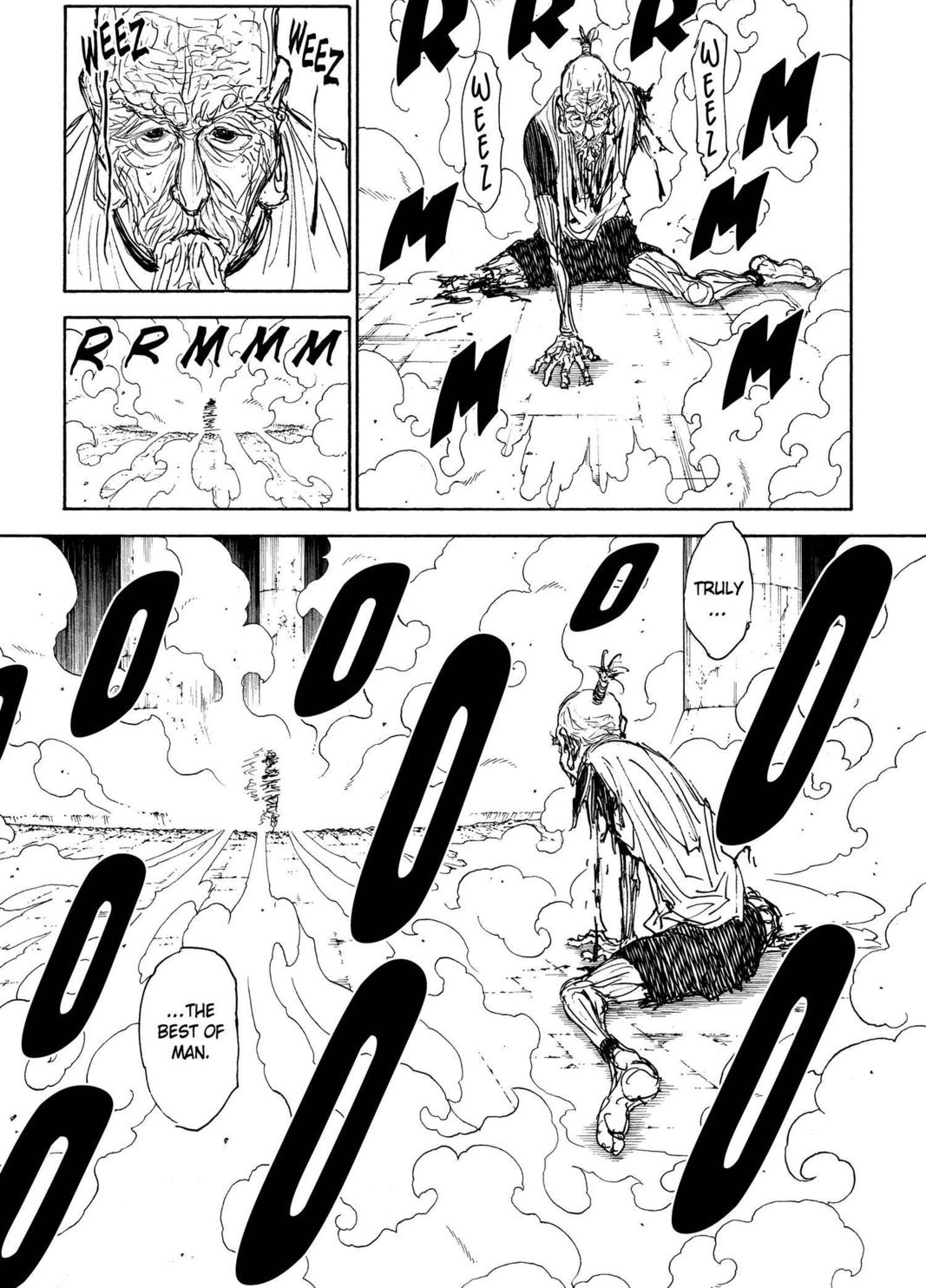

WHAT IS PRAYER?
IT'S AN ACTION...
...OF THE HEART.
100-TYPE GUANYIN BODHISATTVA
FORMED PROPERLY FROM WITHIN, IT BECOMES A WISH...
...AND THE WISH BEARS FRUIT.
ZERO HAND

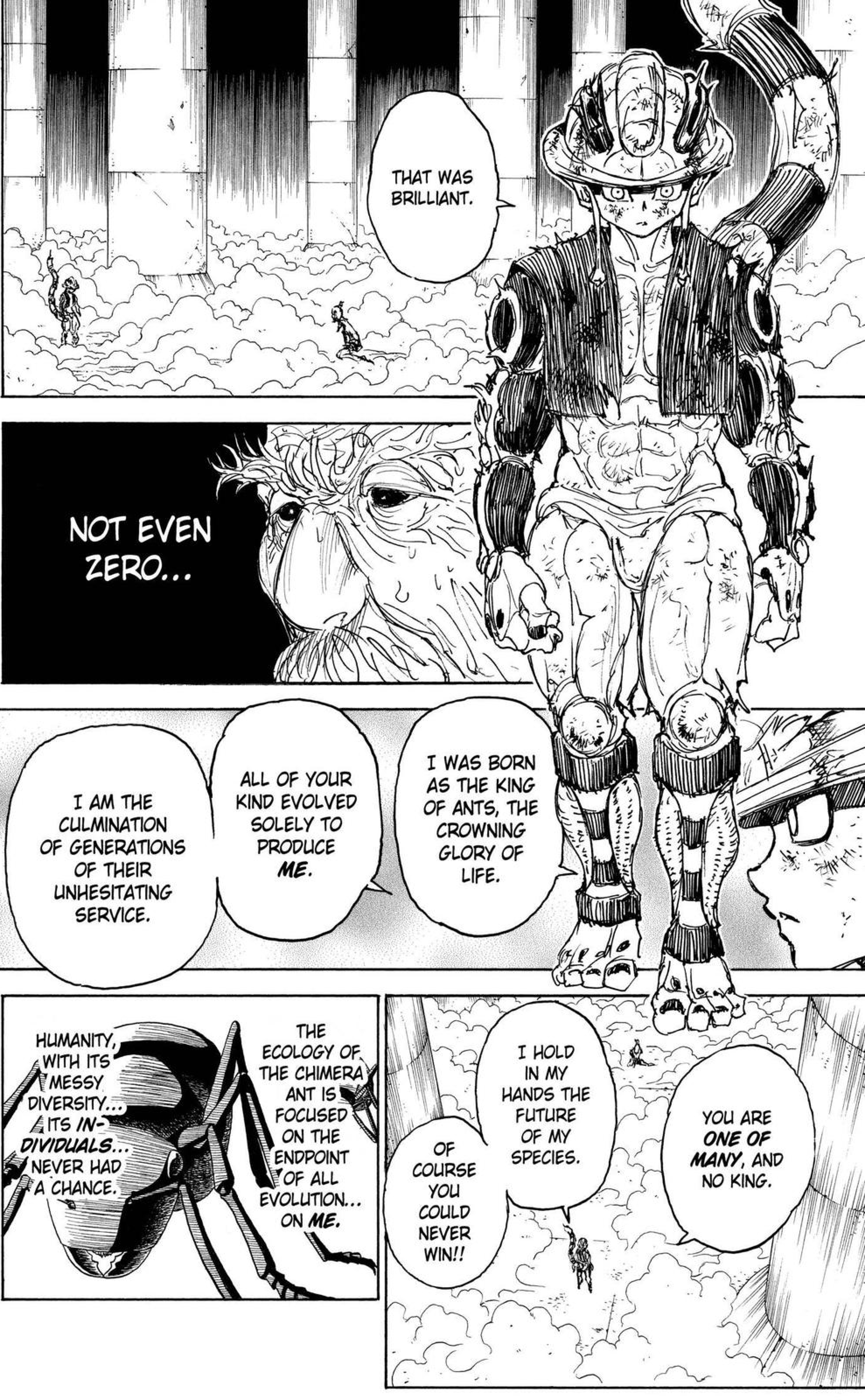

LOOMING FROM BEHIND...
...THE GUANYIN MOVES IN FOR HER FINAL ATTACK.

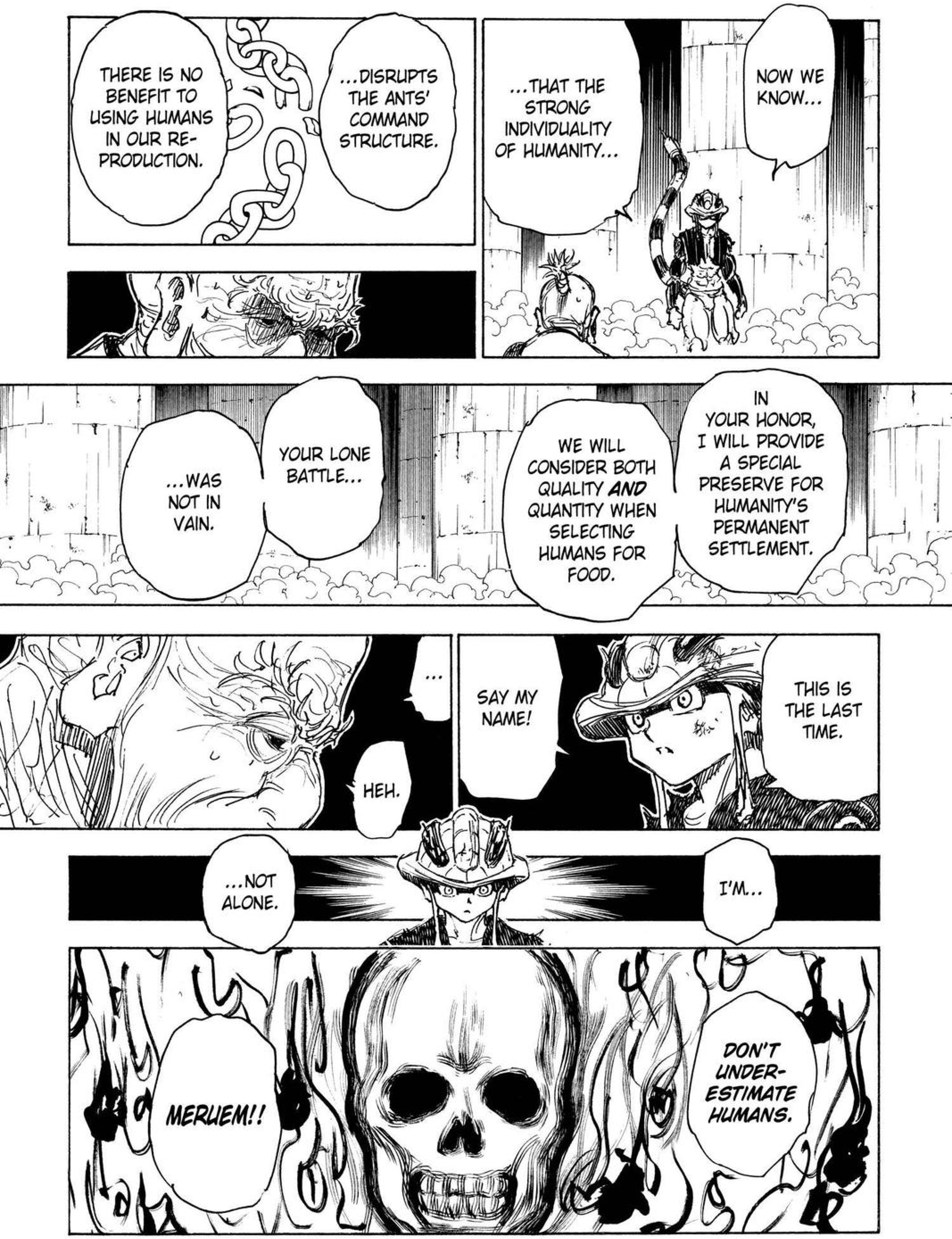

GENTLY ...
...BUT FIRMLY...
...EN-GULFING THE TARGET ...
...IN A TENDER CLASP.
THE MENACE KILLUA SENSED FROM SEVERAL MILES AWAY ...
...WAS NETERO FOCUSING EVERY LAST OUNCE OF HIS AURA.
NO, BAD VIBES.
ALL ...
... FOR THIS.
FIRED IN A FLARE ...
... LIKE A DAZZLING STAR.


IT WAS A MERCILESS ROAR...
...FROM THE MOST MERCIFUL GODDESS.


OOOOOOOOOOOO
ROOARRRRR
ZZAAAA
RRMMMM
RRRRRMMMMMMM
WHOOOOOOOOOM

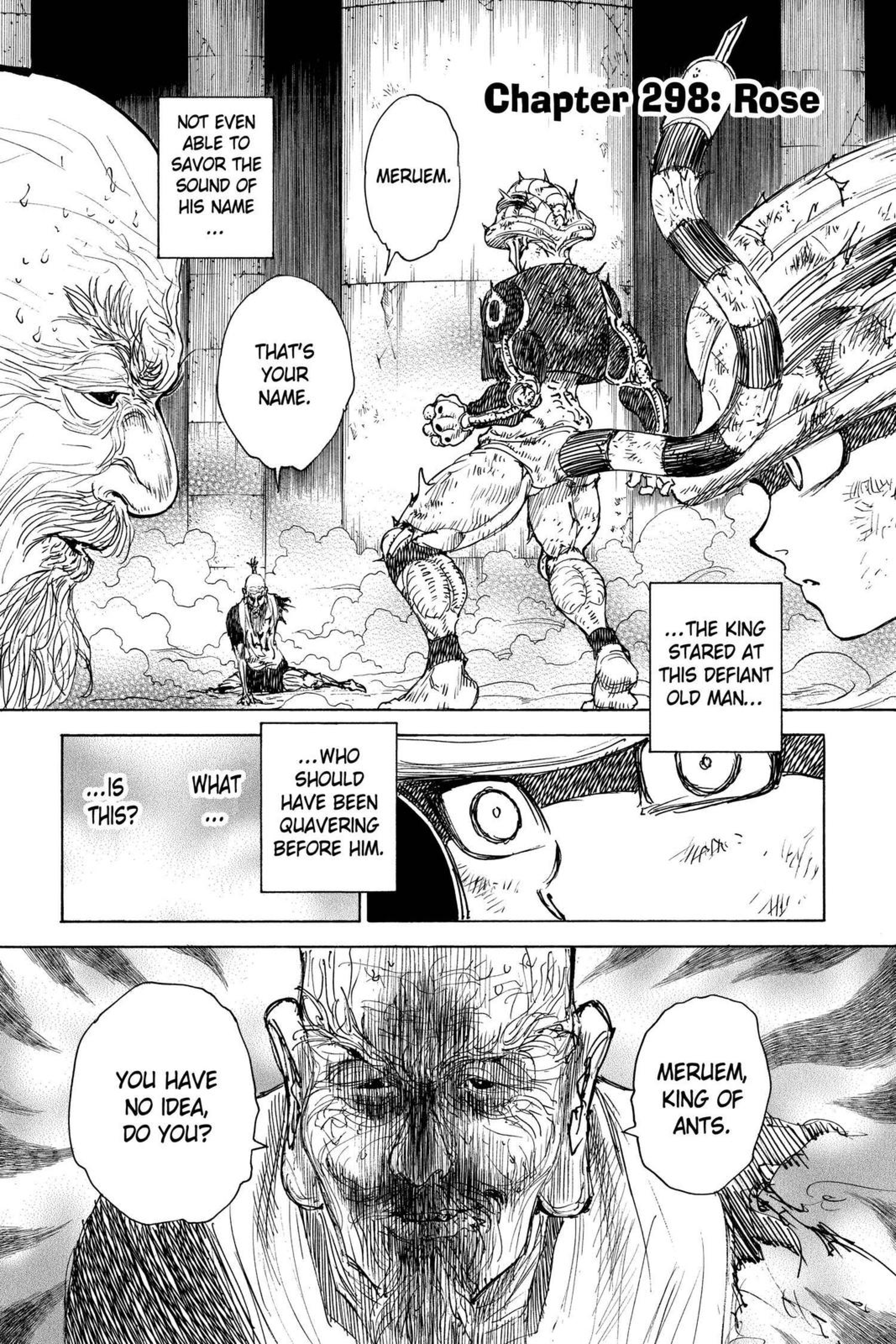

RRRMMMMMMM
WEEZ
WEEZ
WEEZ
WEEZ
RRMMMM
TRULY ...
OOOOOOOOOOOO
...THE BEST OF MAN.

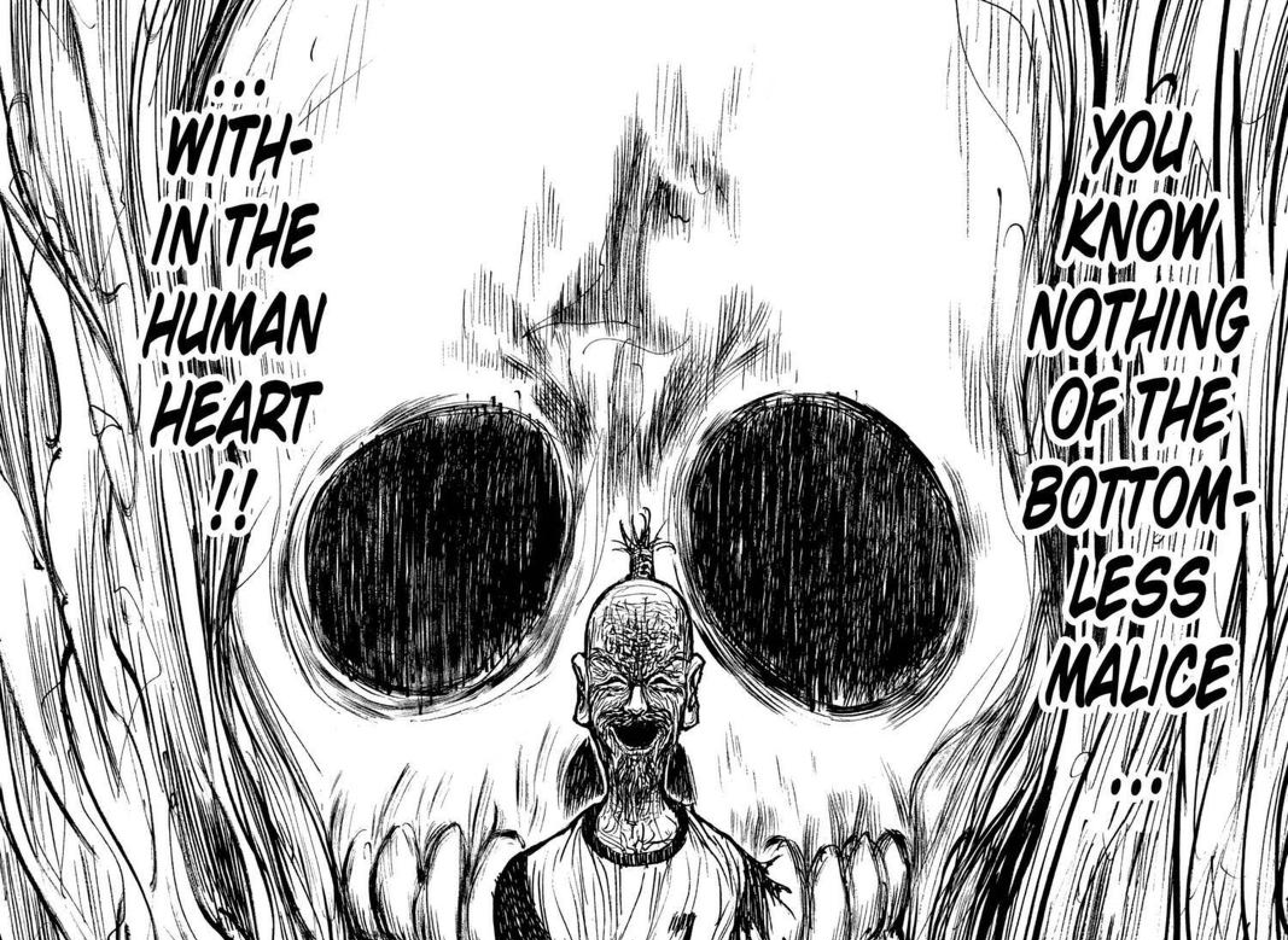

THAT WAS BRILLIANT.
NOT EVEN ZERO...
I WAS BORN AS THE KING OF ANTS, THE CROWNING GLORY OF LIFE.
ALL OF YOUR KIND EVOLVED SOLELY TO PRODUCE *ME*.
I AM THE CULMINATION OF GENERATIONS OF THEIR UNHESITATING SERVICE.
YOU ARE ***ONE OF MANY***, AND NO KING.
I HOLD IN MY HANDS THE FUTURE OF MY SPECIES.
OF COURSE YOU COULD NEVER WIN!!
THE ECOLOGY OF THE CHIMERA ANT IS FOCUSED ON THE ENDPOINT OF ALL EVOLUTION... ON *ME.*
HUMANITY, WITH ITS MESSY DIVERSITY... ITS ***INDIVIDUALS***... NEVER HAD A CHANCE.

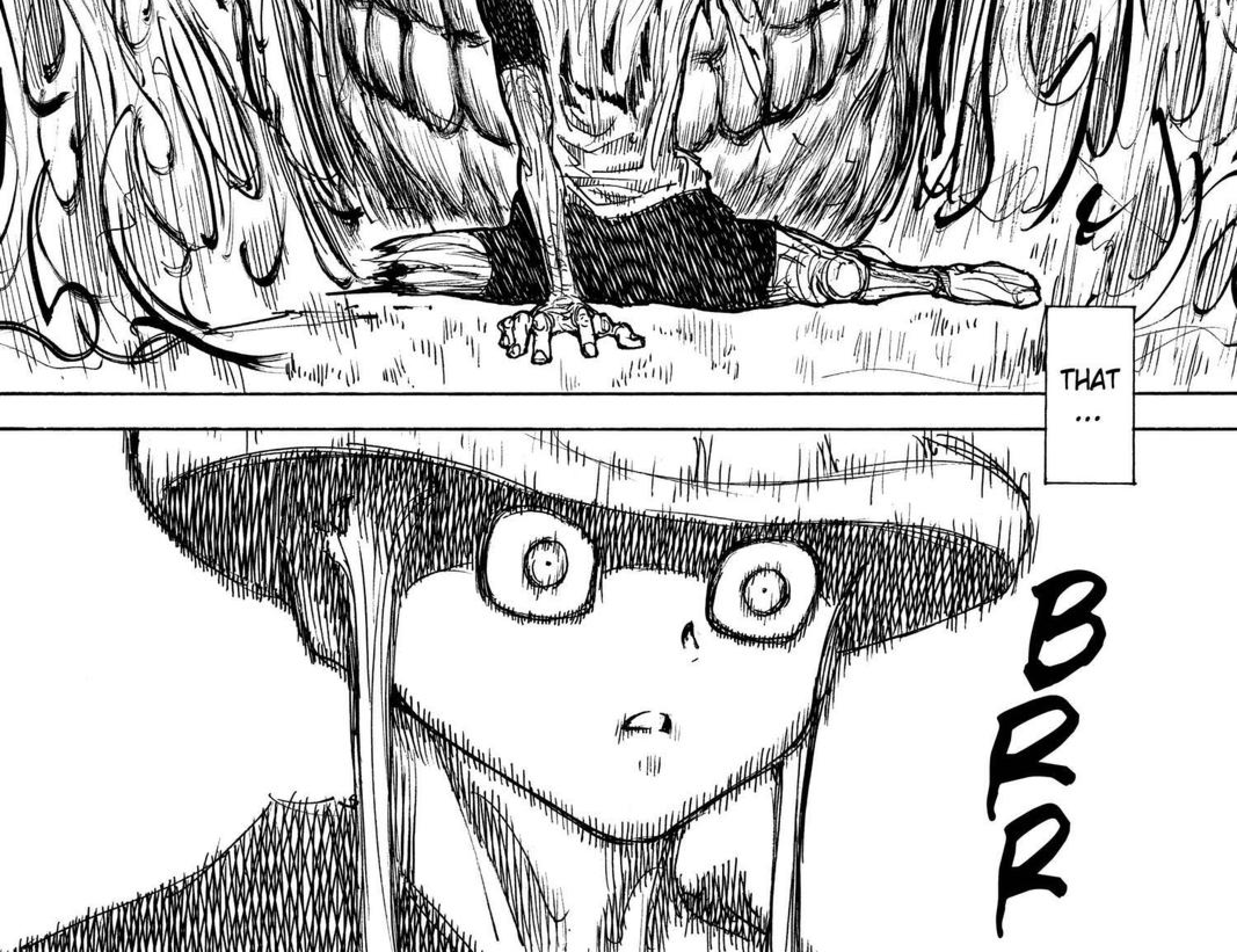

NOW WE KNOW…
…THAT THE STRONG INDIVIDUALITY OF HUMANITY…
…DISRUPTS THE ANTS' COMMAND STRUCTURE.
THERE IS NO BENEFIT TO USING HUMANS IN OUR REPRODUCTION.
IN YOUR HONOR, I WILL PROVIDE A SPECIAL PRESERVE FOR HUMANITY'S PERMANENT SETTLEMENT.
WE WILL CONSIDER BOTH QUALITY ***AND*** QUANTITY WHEN SELECTING HUMANS FOR FOOD.
YOUR LONE BATTLE…
…WAS NOT IN VAIN.
THIS IS THE LAST TIME.
SAY MY NAME!
…
HEH.
I'M…
…NOT ALONE.
DON'T UNDERESTIMATE HUMANS.
MERUEM!!

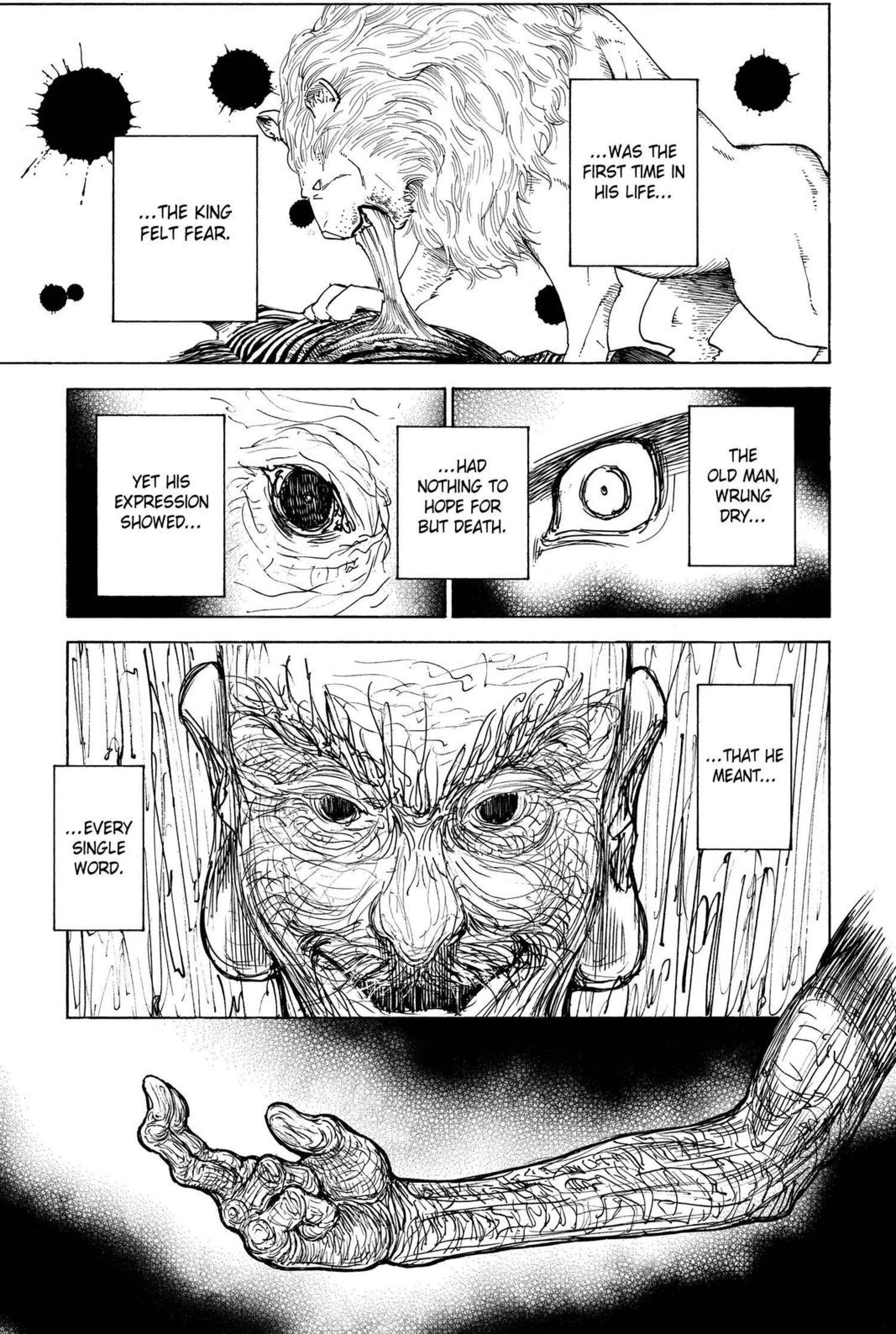
WEEZ
WEEZ

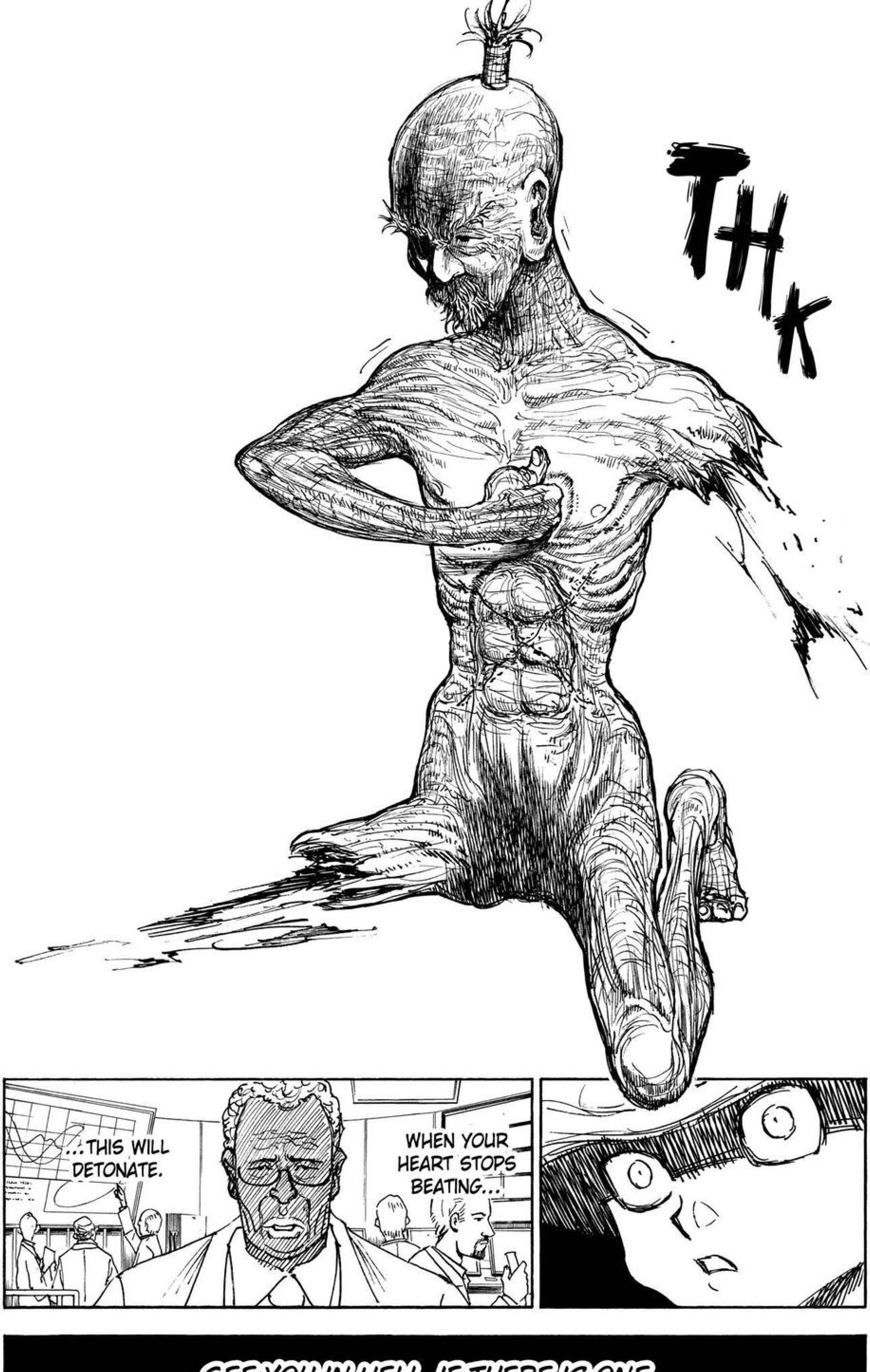
Chapter 298: Rose


MERUEM.
THAT'S YOUR NAME.
NOT EVEN ABLE TO SAVOR THE SOUND OF HIS NAME ...
...THE KING STARED AT THIS DEFIANT OLD MAN...
...WHO SHOULD HAVE BEEN QUAVERING BEFORE HIM.
WHAT ...
...IS THIS?
MERUEM, KING OF ANTS.
YOU HAVE NO IDEA, DO YOU?

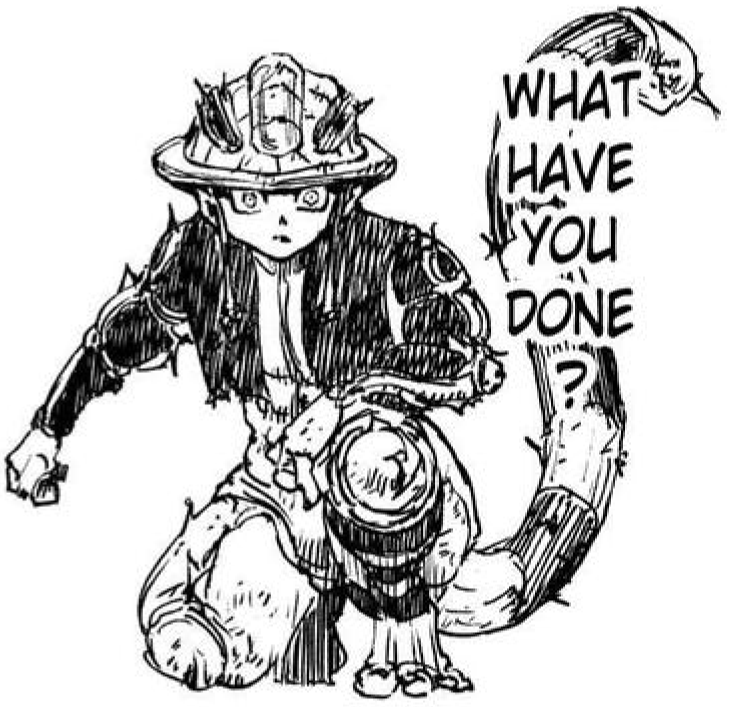

YOU KNOW NOTHING OF THE BOTTOMLESS MALICE...
...WITHIN THE HUMAN HEART!!

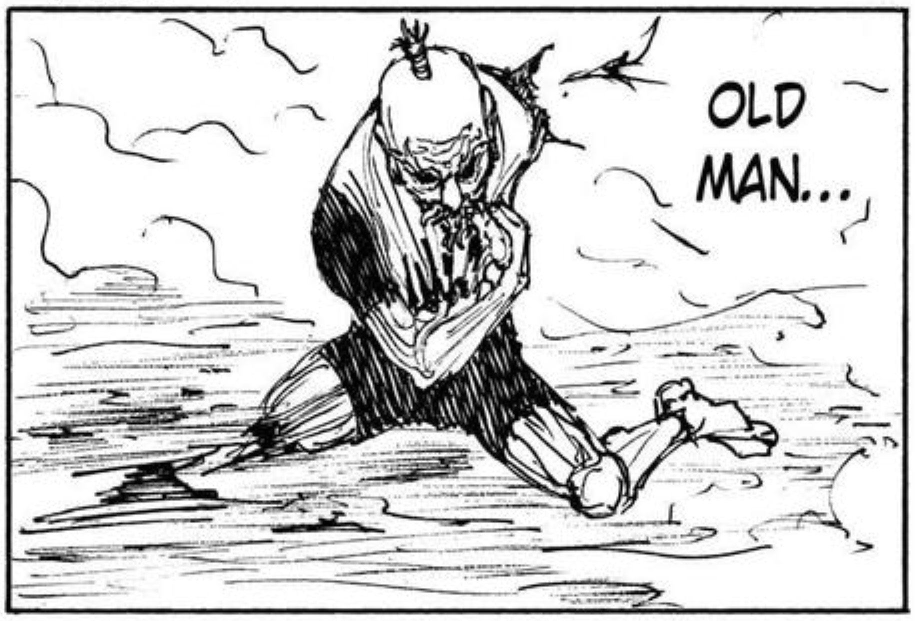

THAT...
BRRR

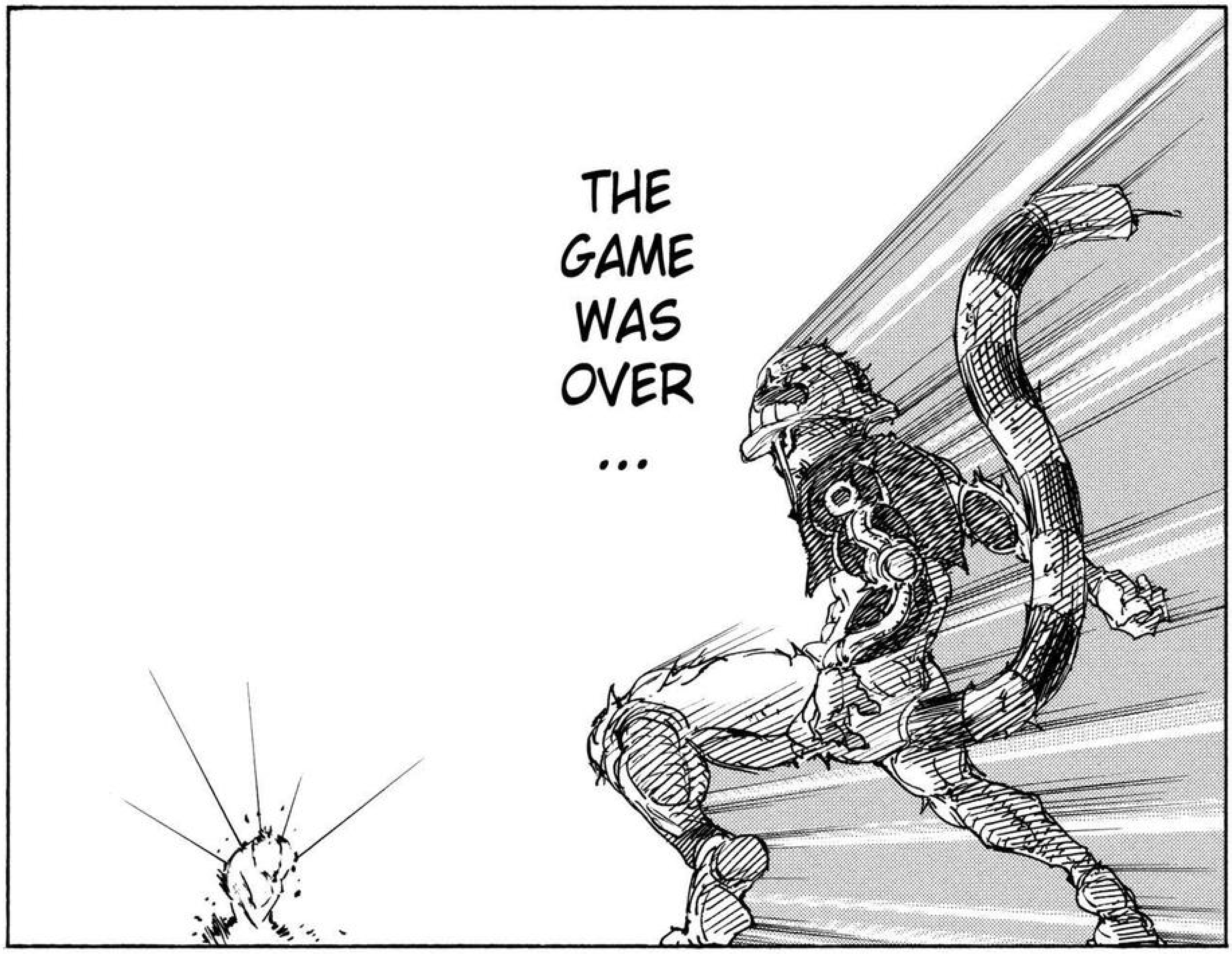

...WAS THE FIRST TIME IN HIS LIFE...
...THE KING FELT FEAR.
THE OLD MAN, WRUNG DRY...
...HAD NOTHING TO HOPE FOR BUT DEATH.
YET HIS EXPRESSION SHOWED...
...THAT HE MEANT...
...EVERY SINGLE WORD.

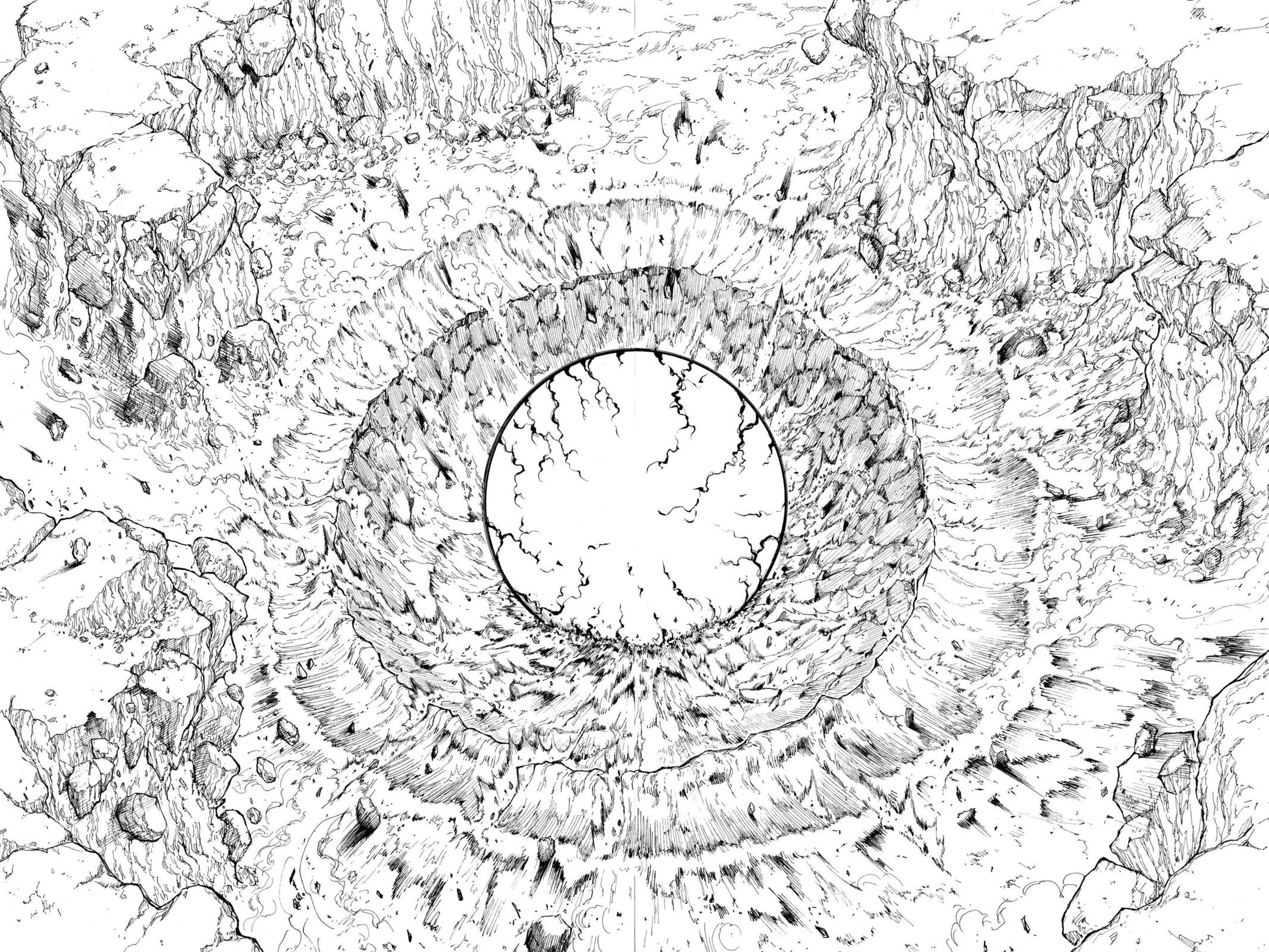

THK
WHEN YOUR HEART STOPS BEATING…
…THIS WILL DETONATE.
SEE YOU IN HELL, IF THERE IS ONE.

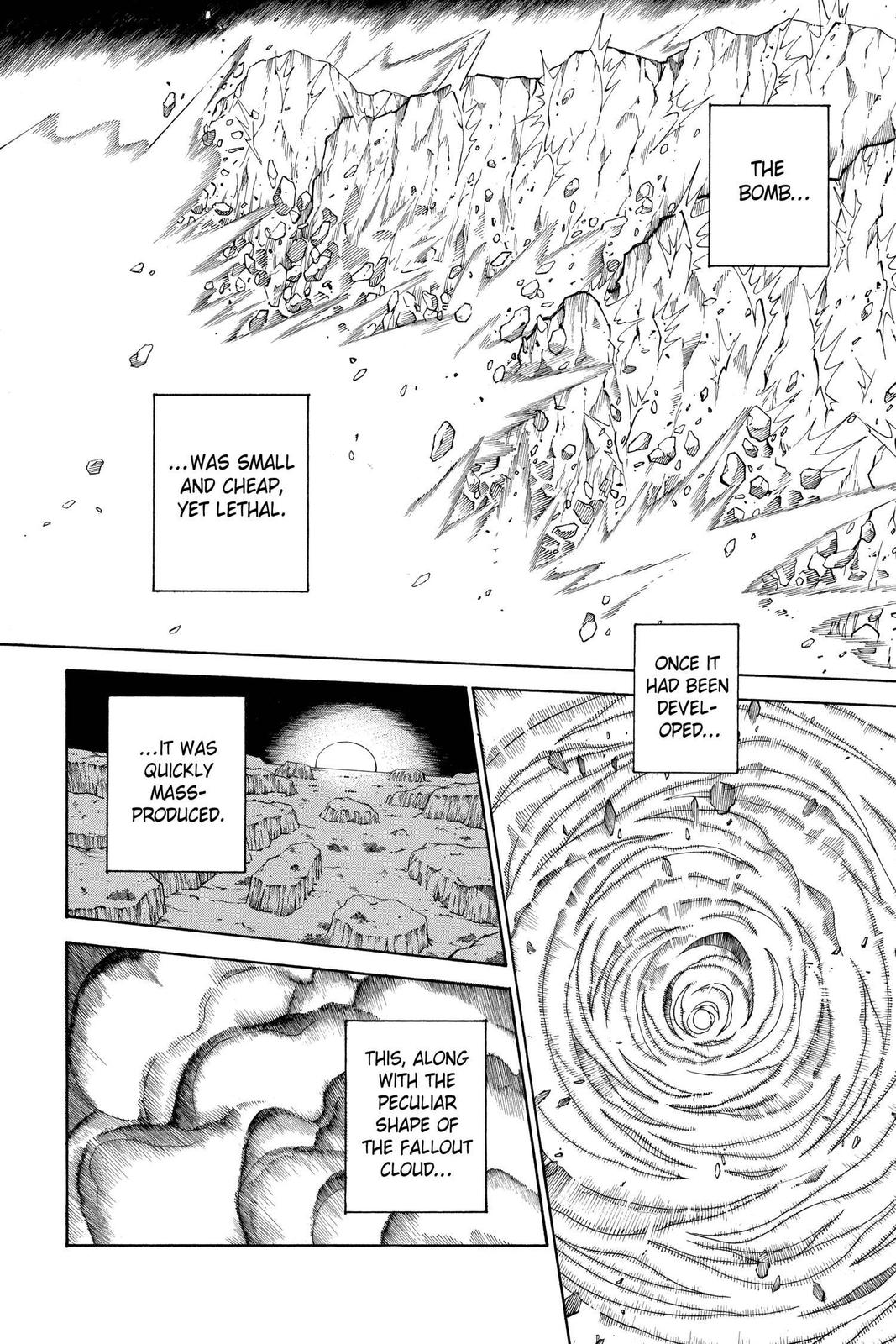
READ THIS WAY

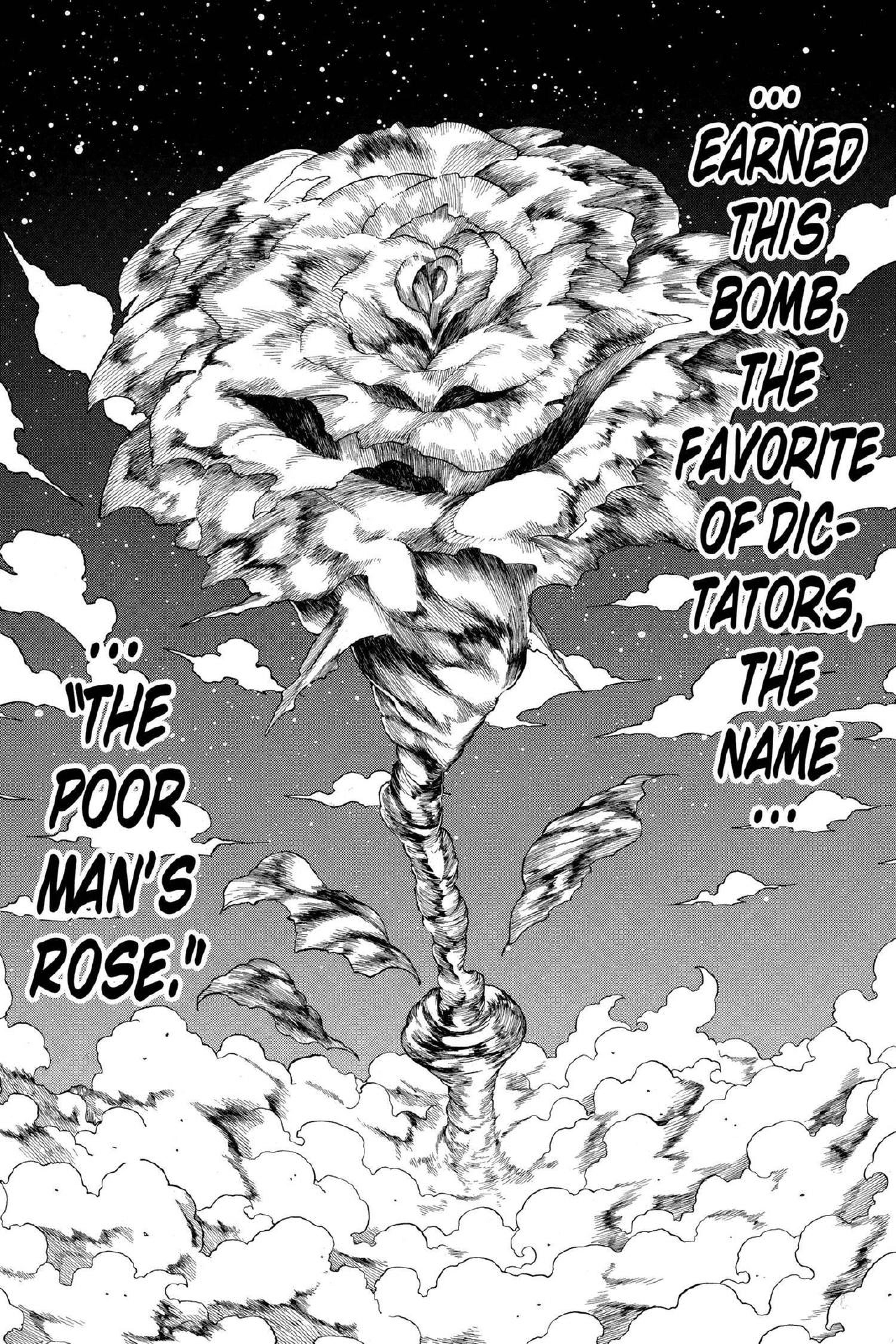

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

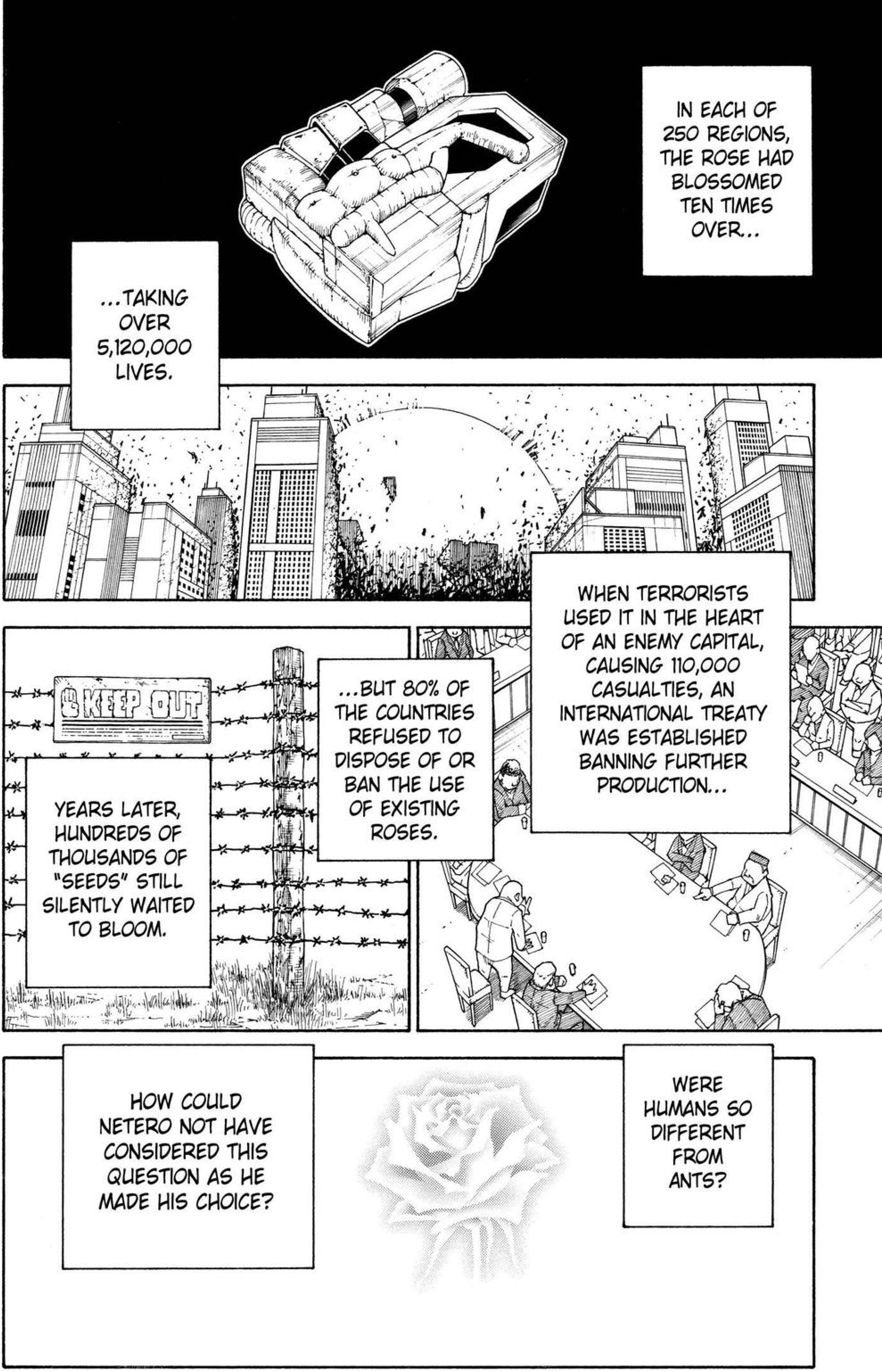


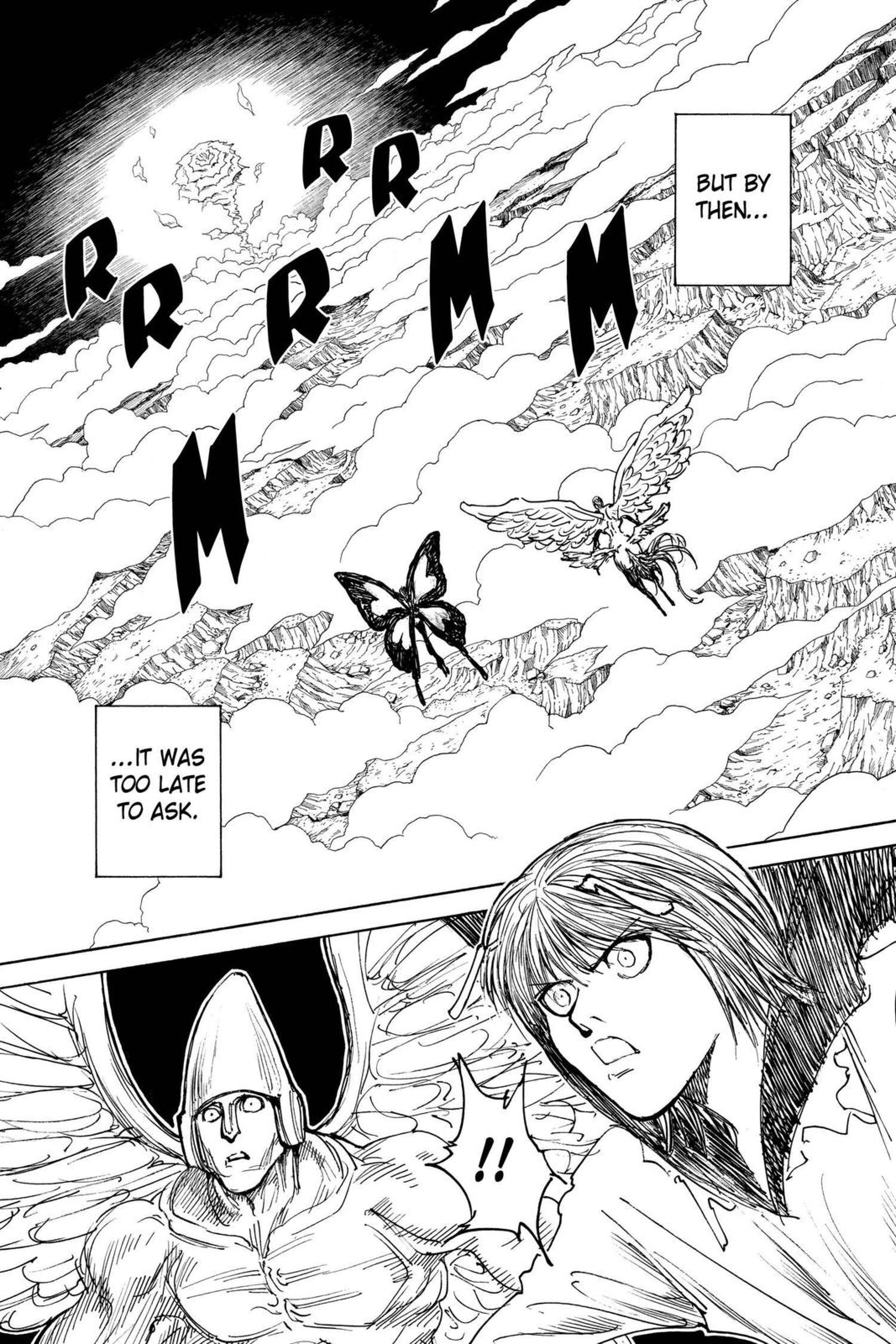

THE GAME WAS OVER ...
...BEFORE WE EVEN STARTED.
FASH

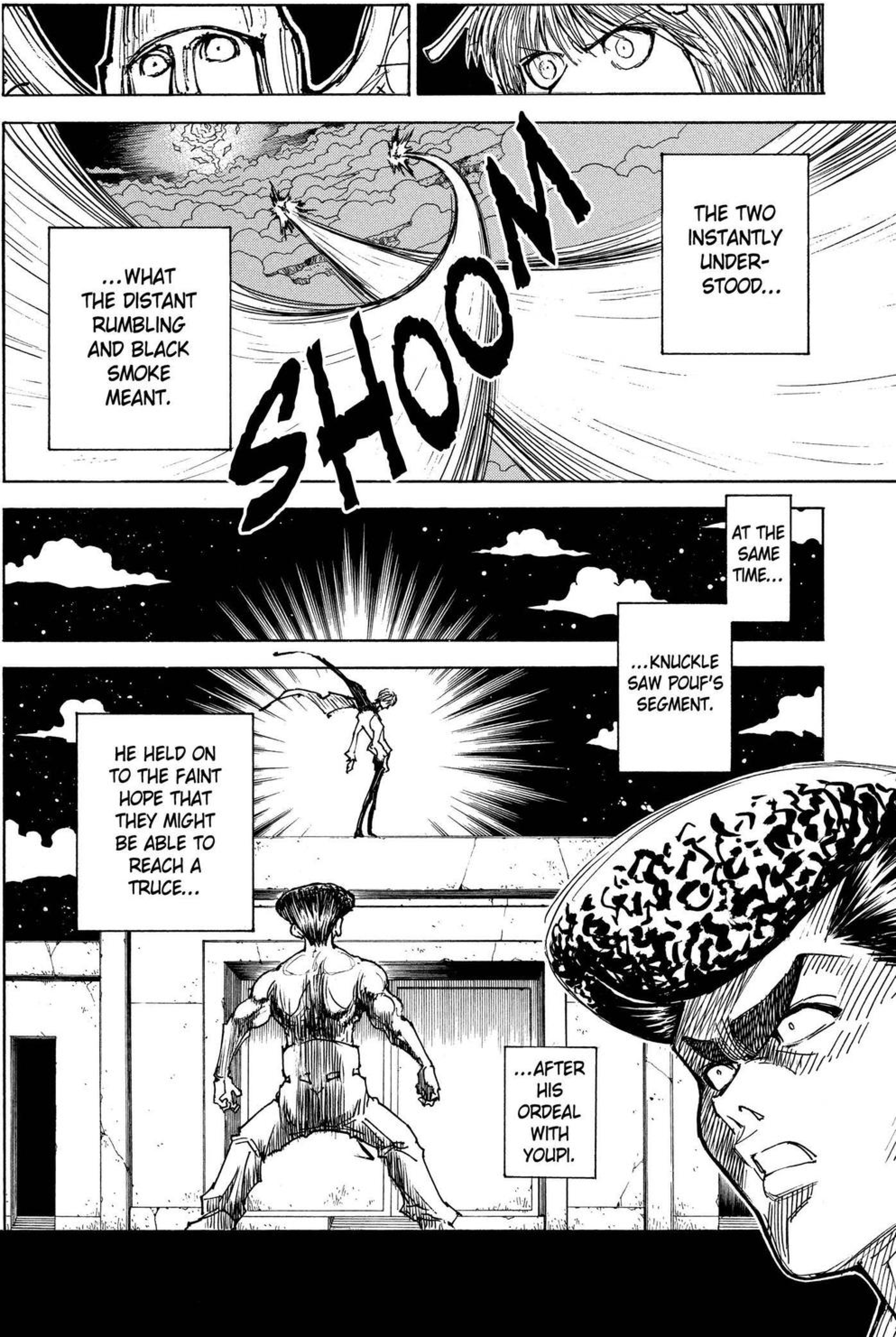


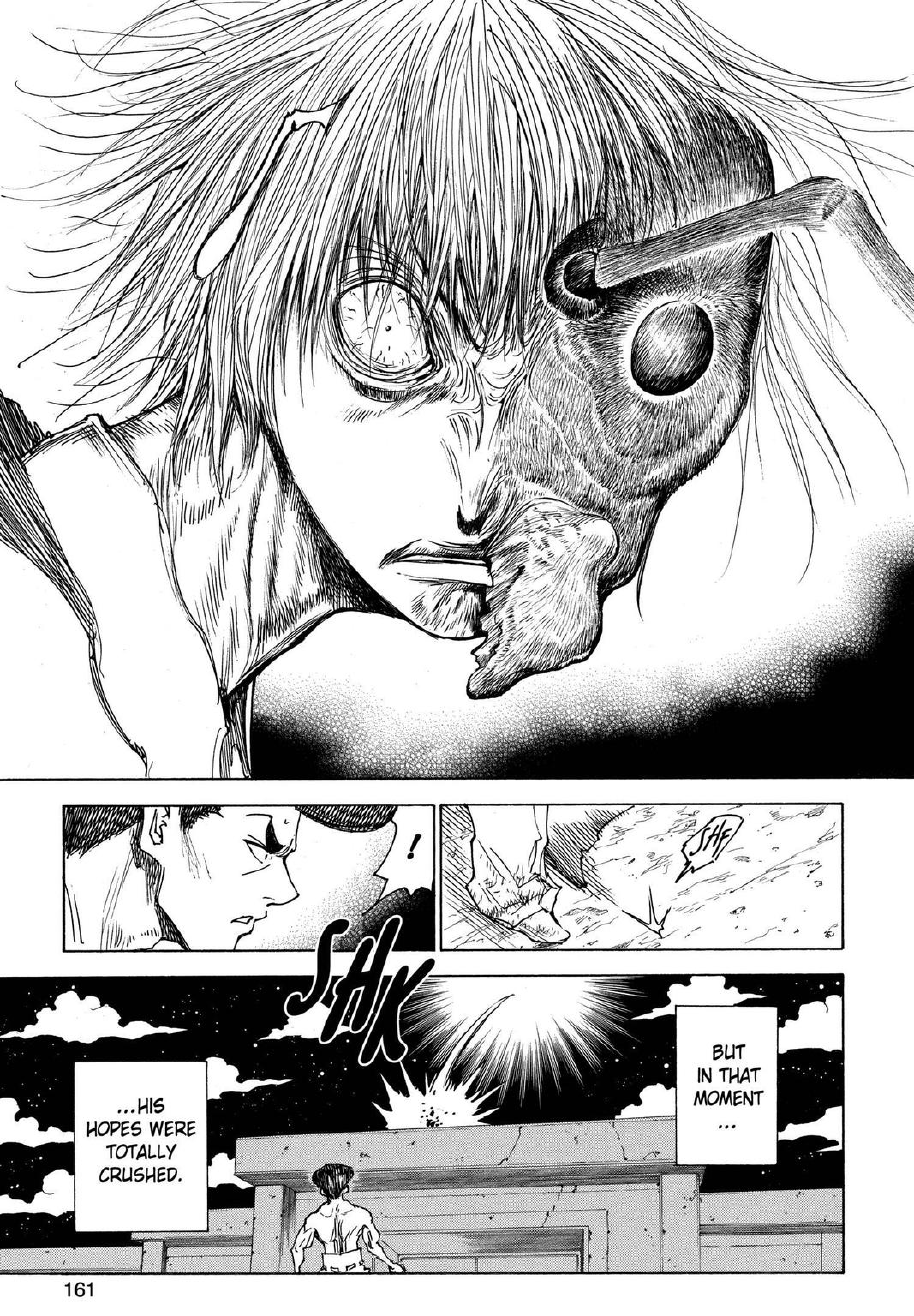

THE BOMB...
...WAS SMALL AND CHEAP, YET LETHAL.
ONCE IT HAD BEEN DEVELOPED...
...IT WAS QUICKLY MASS-PRODUCED.
THIS, ALONG WITH THE PECULIAR SHAPE OF THE FALLOUT CLOUD...

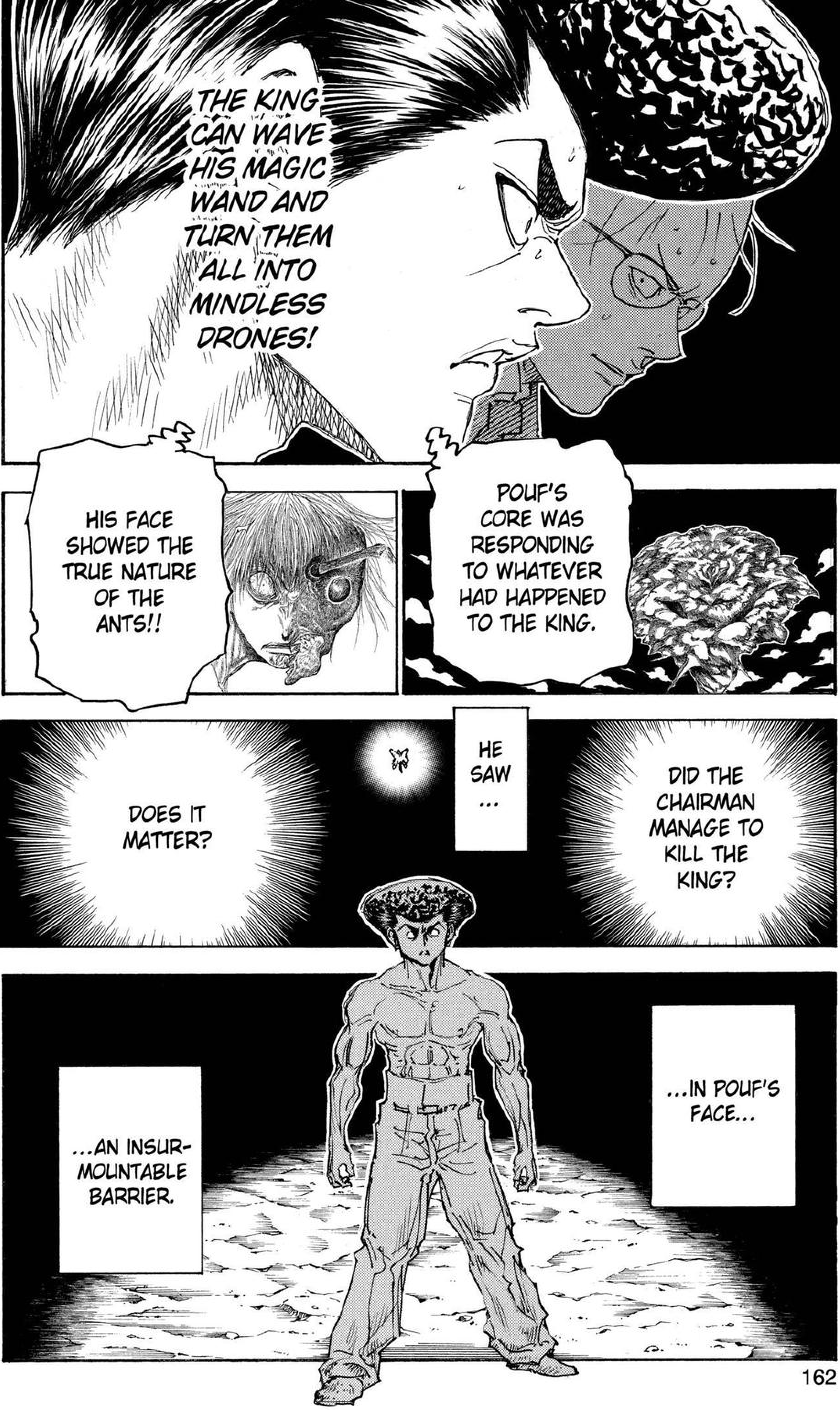

...EARNED THIS BOMB, THE FAVORITE OF DICTATORS, THE NAME ...
..."THE POOR MAN'S ROSE."

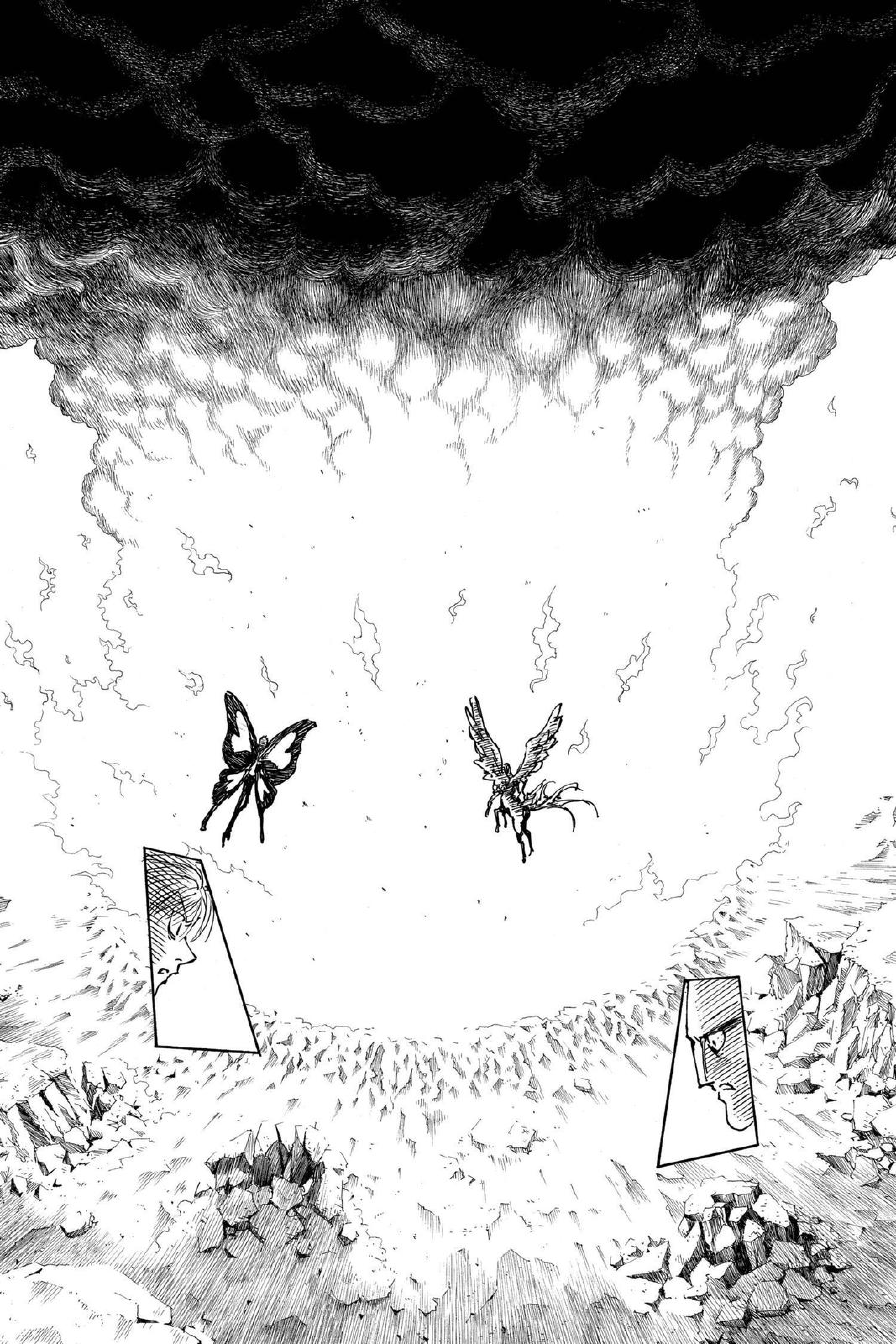

IN EACH OF 250 REGIONS, THE ROSE HAD BLOSSOMED TEN TIMES OVER...
...TAKING OVER 5,120,000 LIVES.
WHEN TERRORISTS USED IT IN THE HEART OF AN ENEMY CAPITAL, CAUSING 110,000 CASUALTIES, AN INTERNATIONAL TREATY WAS ESTABLISHED BANNING FURTHER PRODUCTION...
...BUT 80% OF THE COUNTRIES REFUSED TO DISPOSE OF OR BAN THE USE OF EXISTING ROSES.
KEEP OUT
YEARS LATER, HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF "SEEDS" STILL SILENTLY WAITED TO BLOOM.
WERE HUMANS SO DIFFERENT FROM ANTS?
HOW COULD NETERO NOT HAVE CONSIDERED THIS QUESTION AS HE MADE HIS CHOICE?

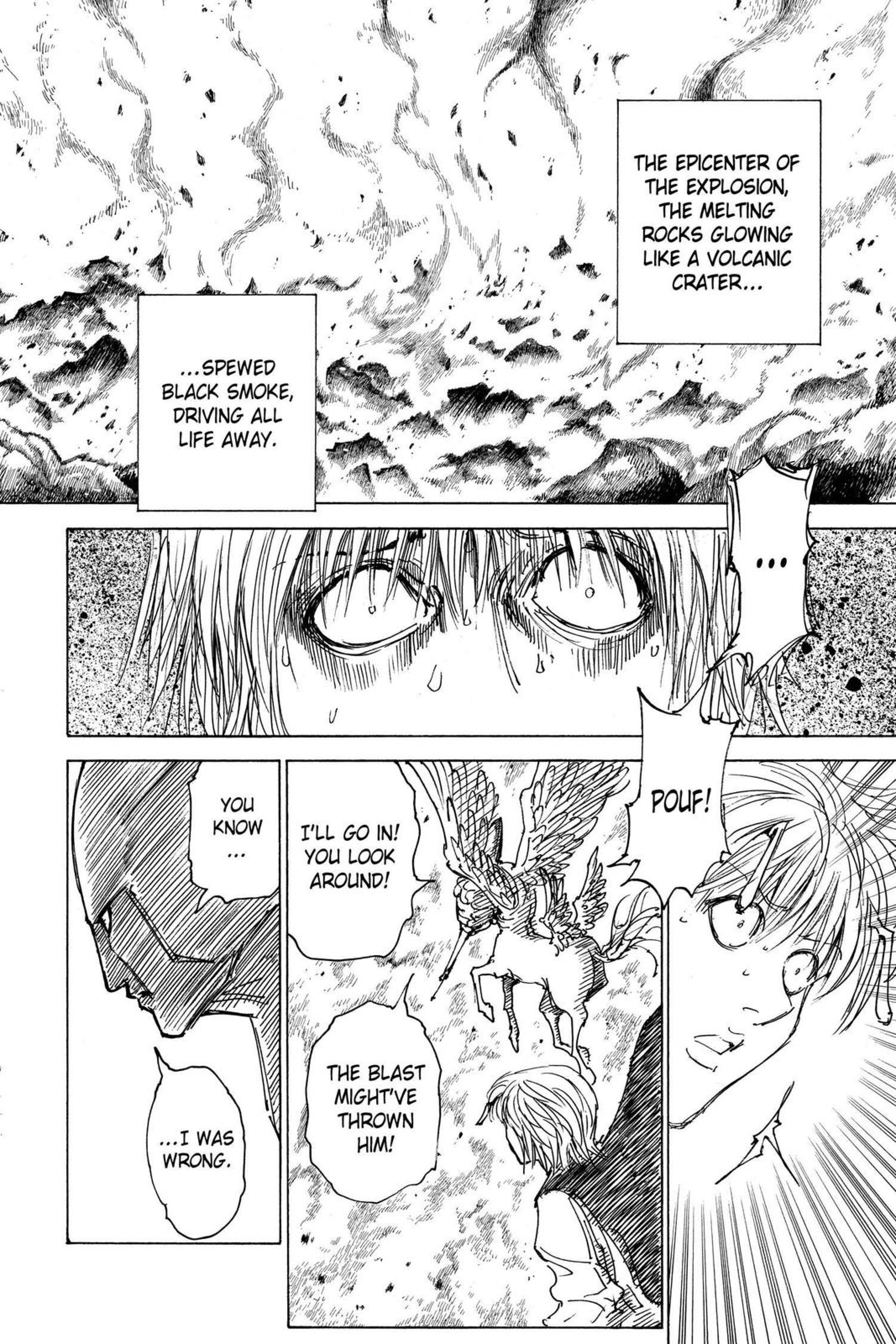

BUT BY THEN...
RRRRRMMM
...IT WAS TOO LATE TO ASK.
!!

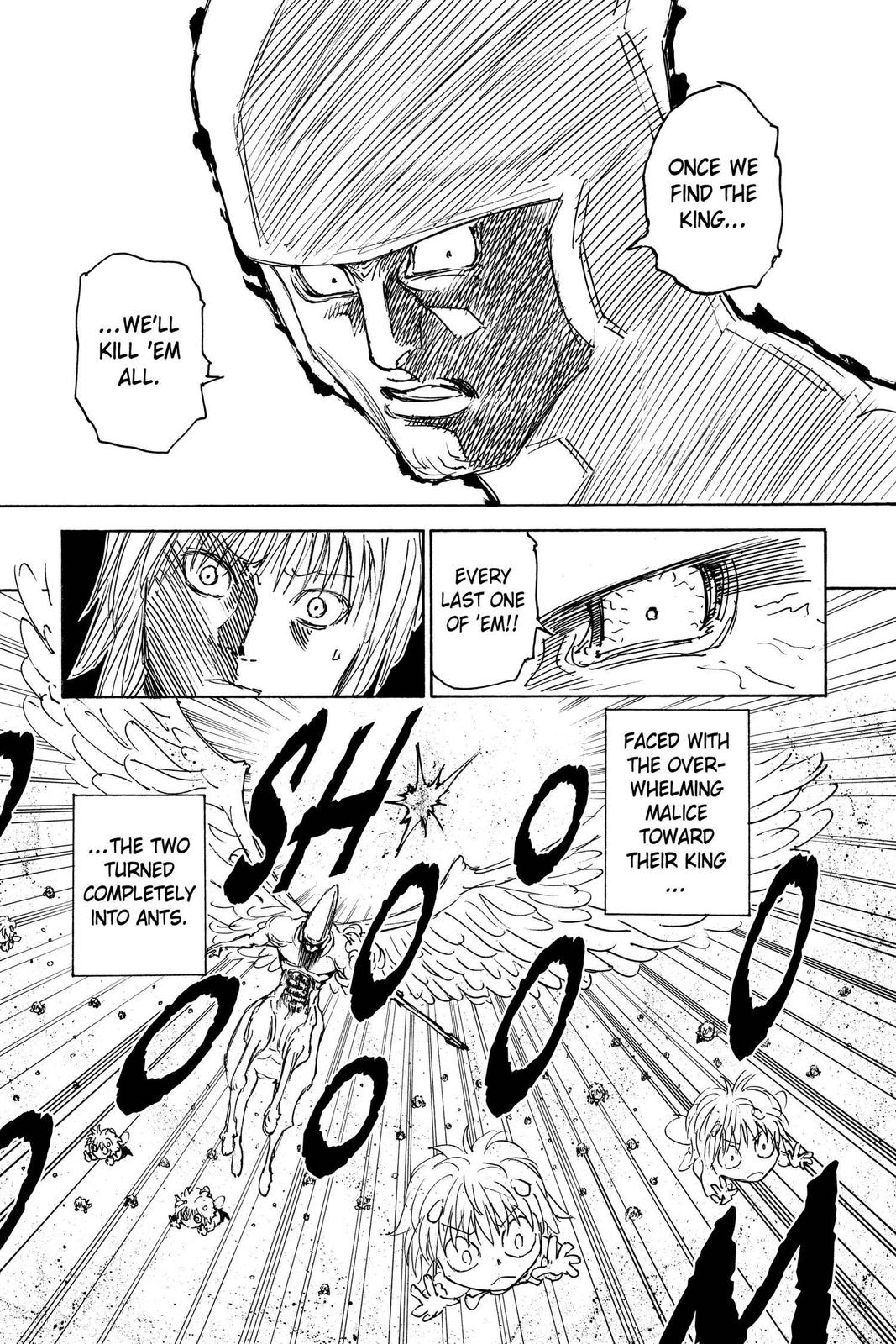

THE TWO INSTANTLY UNDERSTOOD...
SHOOM
...WHAT THE DISTANT RUMBLING AND BLACK SMOKE MEANT.
AT THE SAME TIME...
...KNUCKLE SAW POUF'S SEGMENT.
HE HELD ON TO THE FAINT HOPE THAT THEY MIGHT BE ABLE TO REACH A TRUCE...
...AFTER HIS ORDEAL WITH YOUPI.

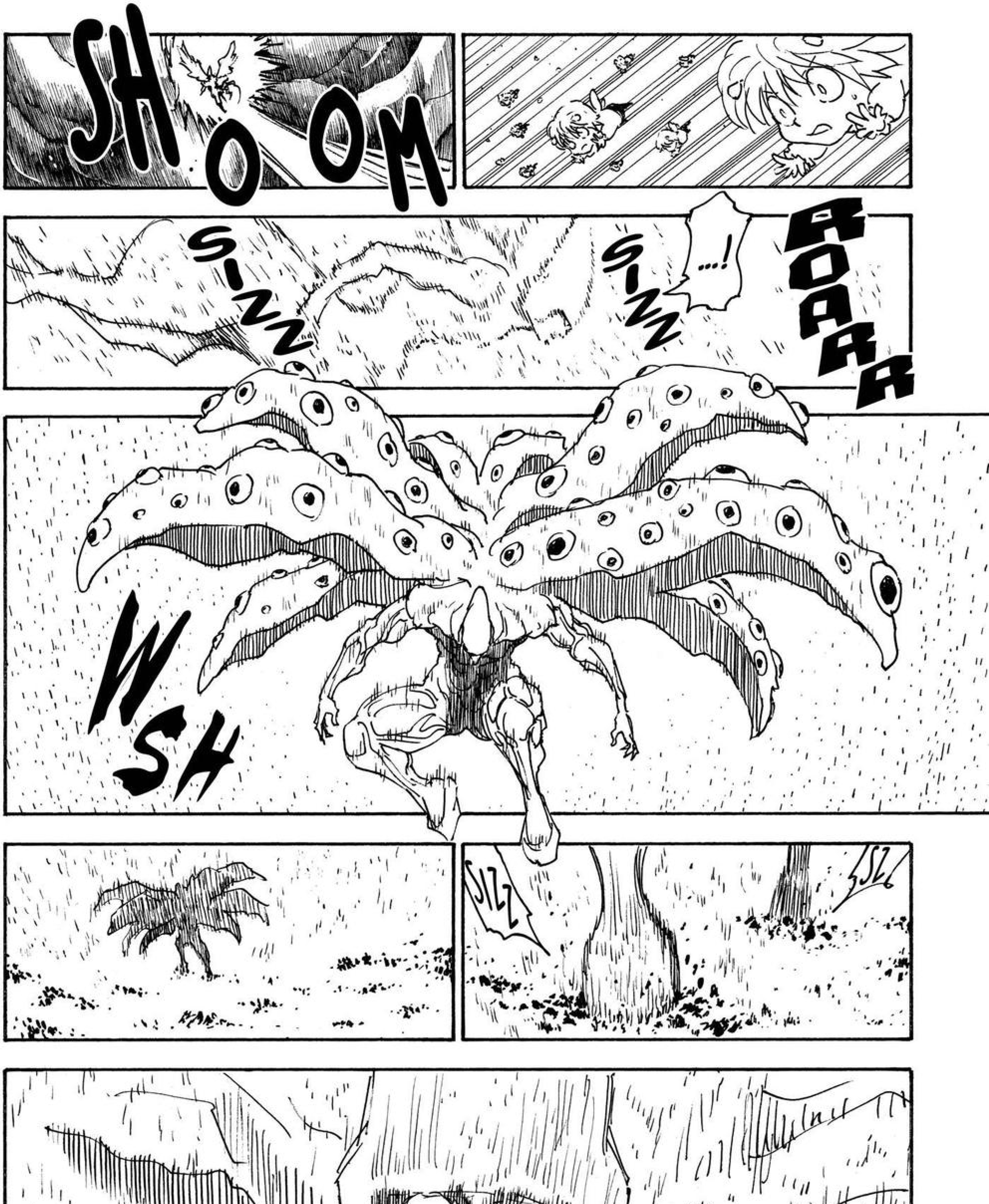

SHF
!
SHK
BUT IN THAT MOMENT ...
...HIS HOPES WERE TOTALLY CRUSHED.


THE KING CAN WAVE HIS MAGIC WAND AND TURN THEM ALL INTO MINDLESS DRONES!
POUF'S CORE WAS RESPONDING TO WHATEVER HAD HAPPENED TO THE KING.
HIS FACE SHOWED THE TRUE NATURE OF THE ANTS!!
DID THE CHAIRMAN MANAGE TO KILL THE KING?
DOES IT MATTER?
HE SAW ...
...IN POUF'S FACE...
...AN INSURMOUNTABLE BARRIER.

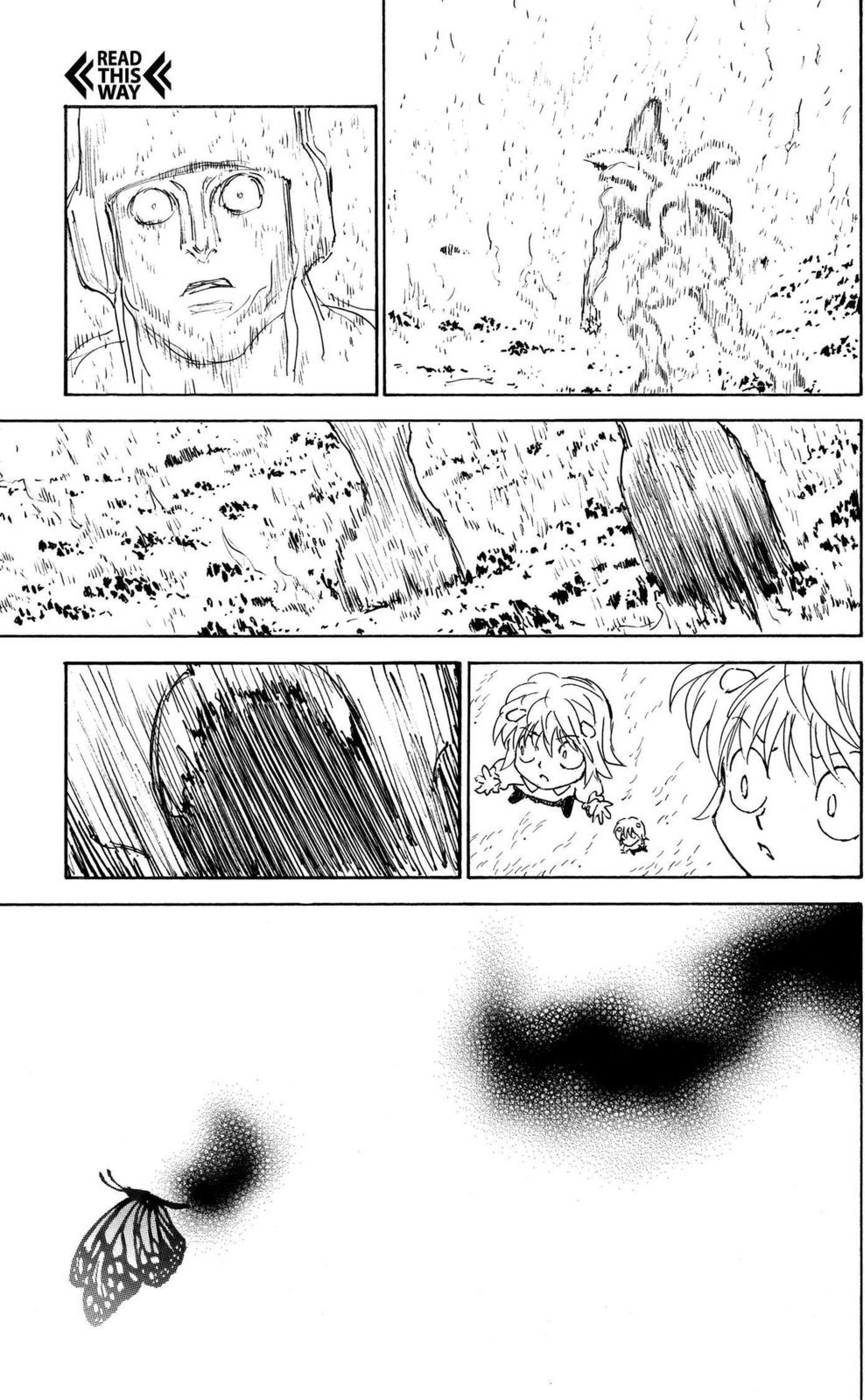



THE EPICENTER OF THE EXPLOSION, THE MELTING ROCKS GLOWING LIKE A VOLCANIC CRATER...
...SPEWED BLACK SMOKE, DRIVING ALL LIFE AWAY.
...
POUF!
I'LL GO IN! YOU LOOK AROUND!
THE BLAST MIGHT'VE THROWN HIM!
YOU KNOW ...
...I WAS WRONG.

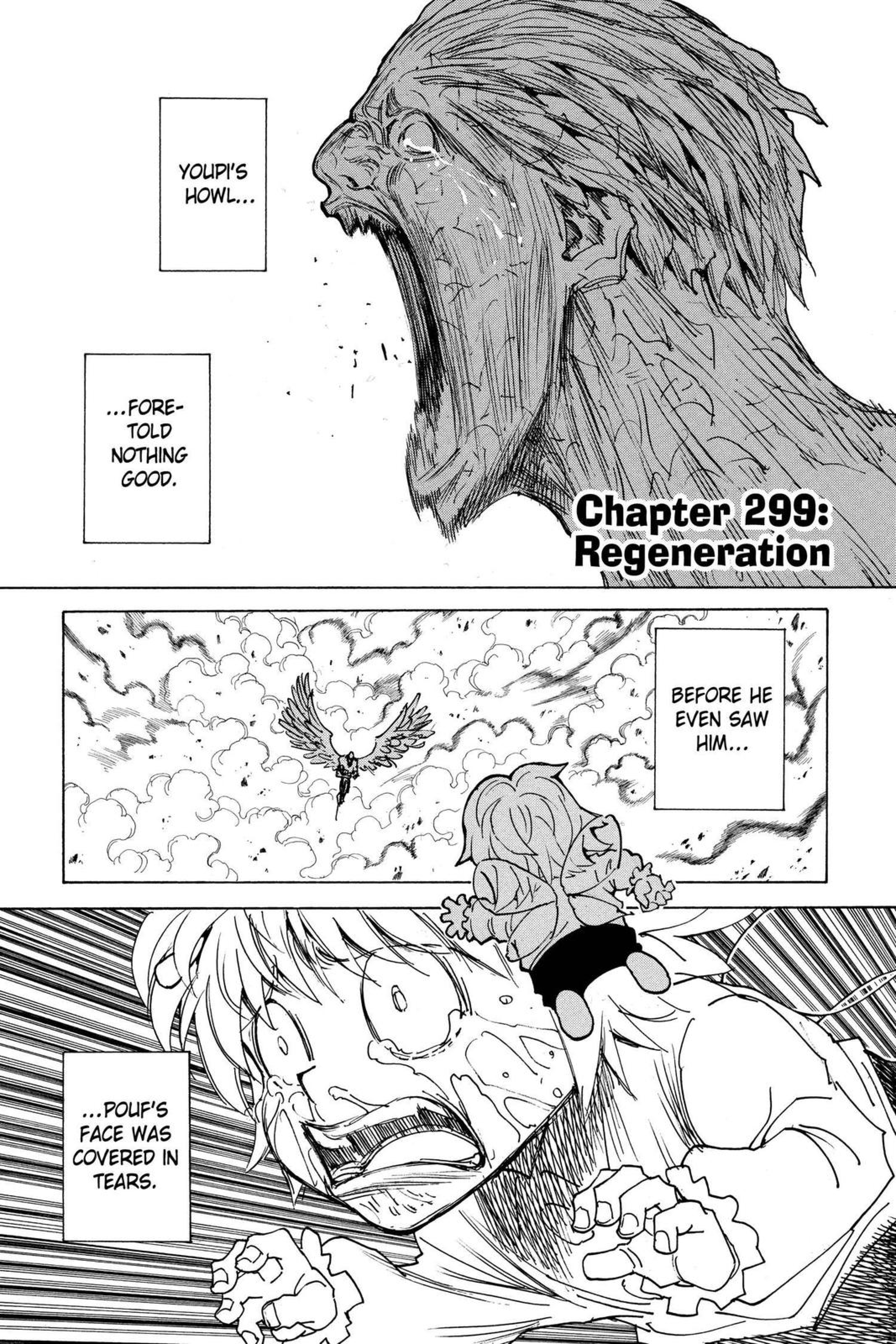

ONCE WE FIND THE KING...
...WE'LL KILL 'EM ALL.
EVERY LAST ONE OF 'EM!!
FACED WITH THE OVERWHELMING MALICE TOWARD THEIR KING...
...THE TWO TURNED COMPLETELY INTO ANTS.
SHOOOOOOOOOM

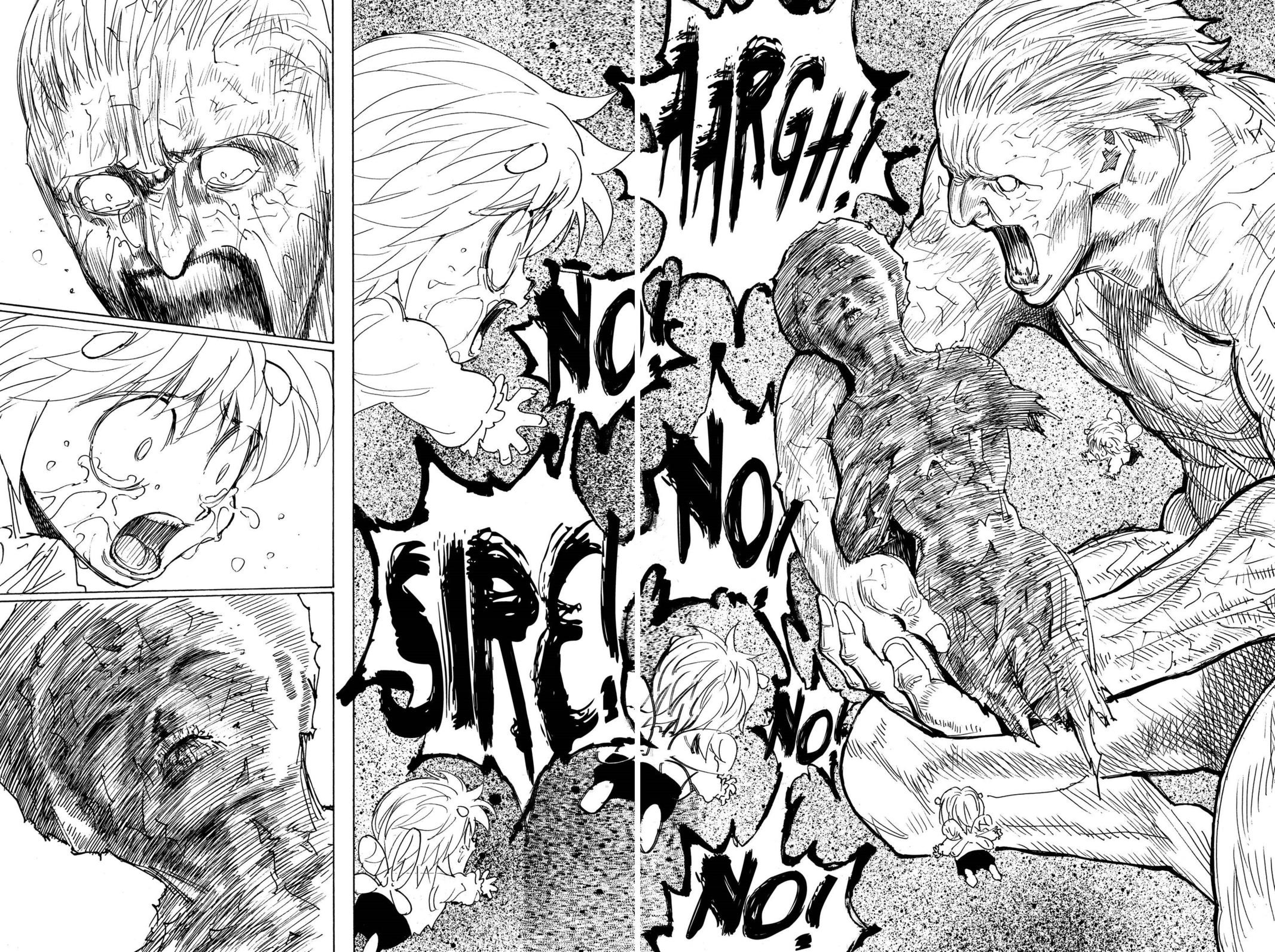

SHOOM
ROARR
...!
SIZZ
SIZZ
WSH
SZZ
SIZZ

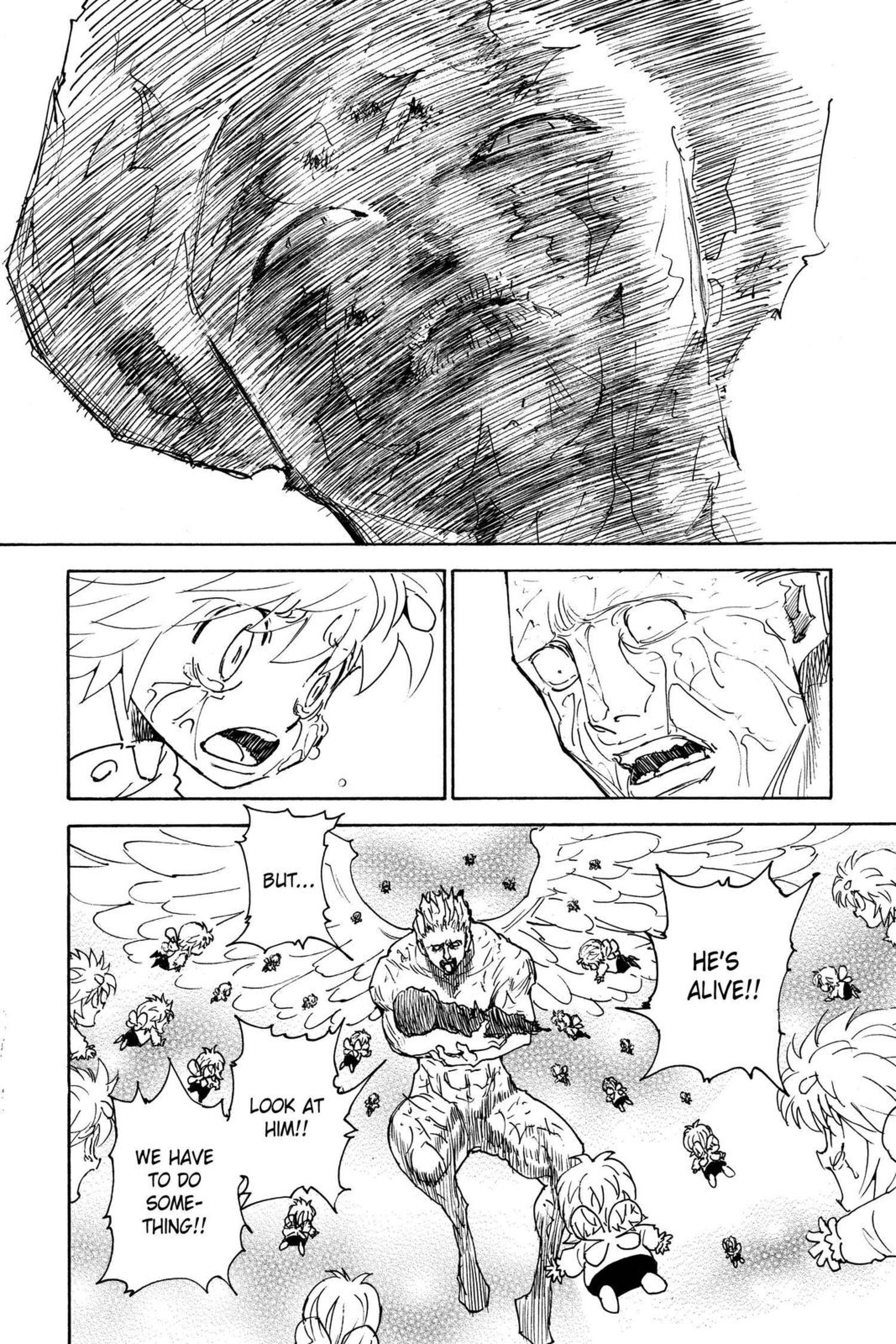
READ THIS WAY

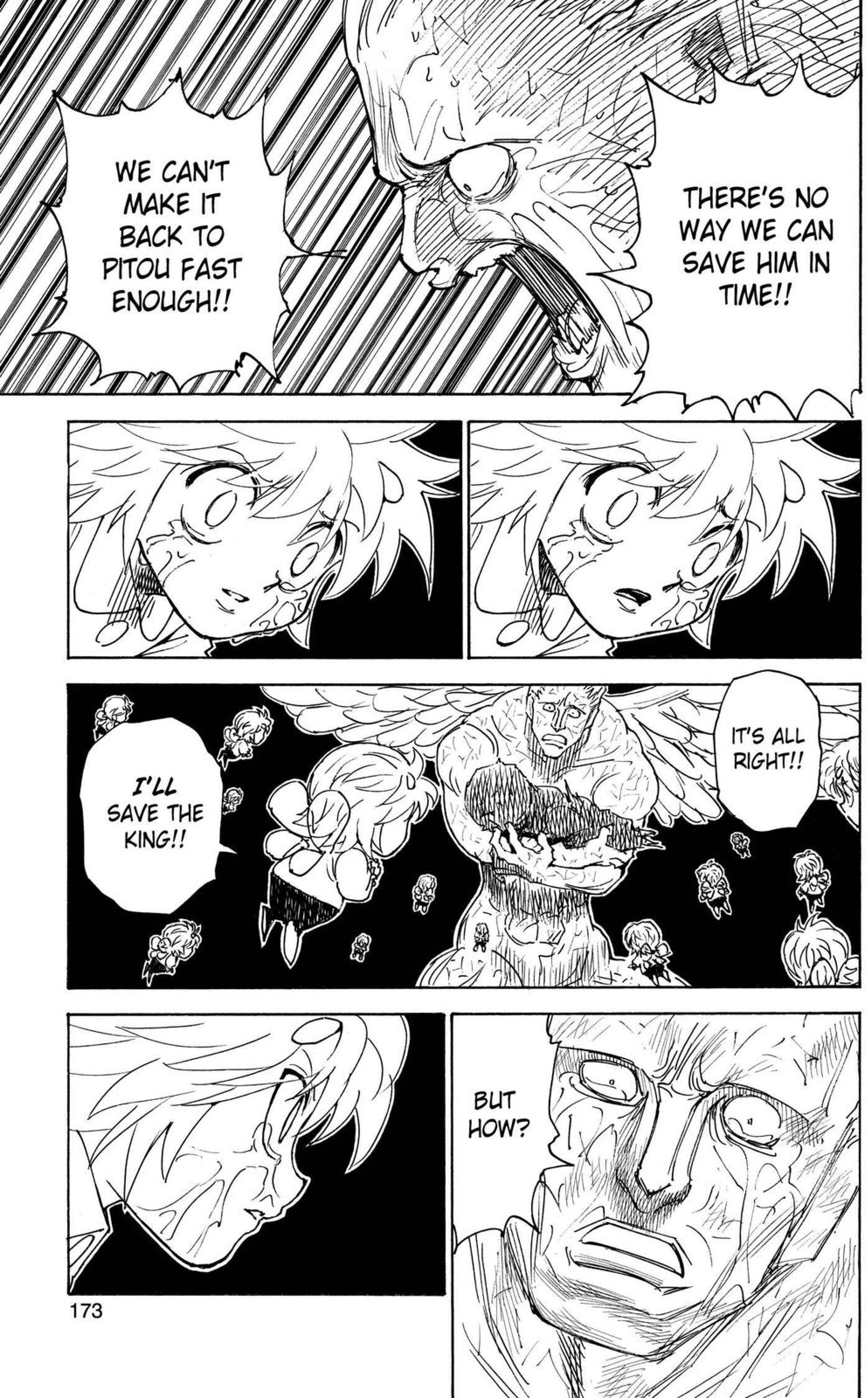


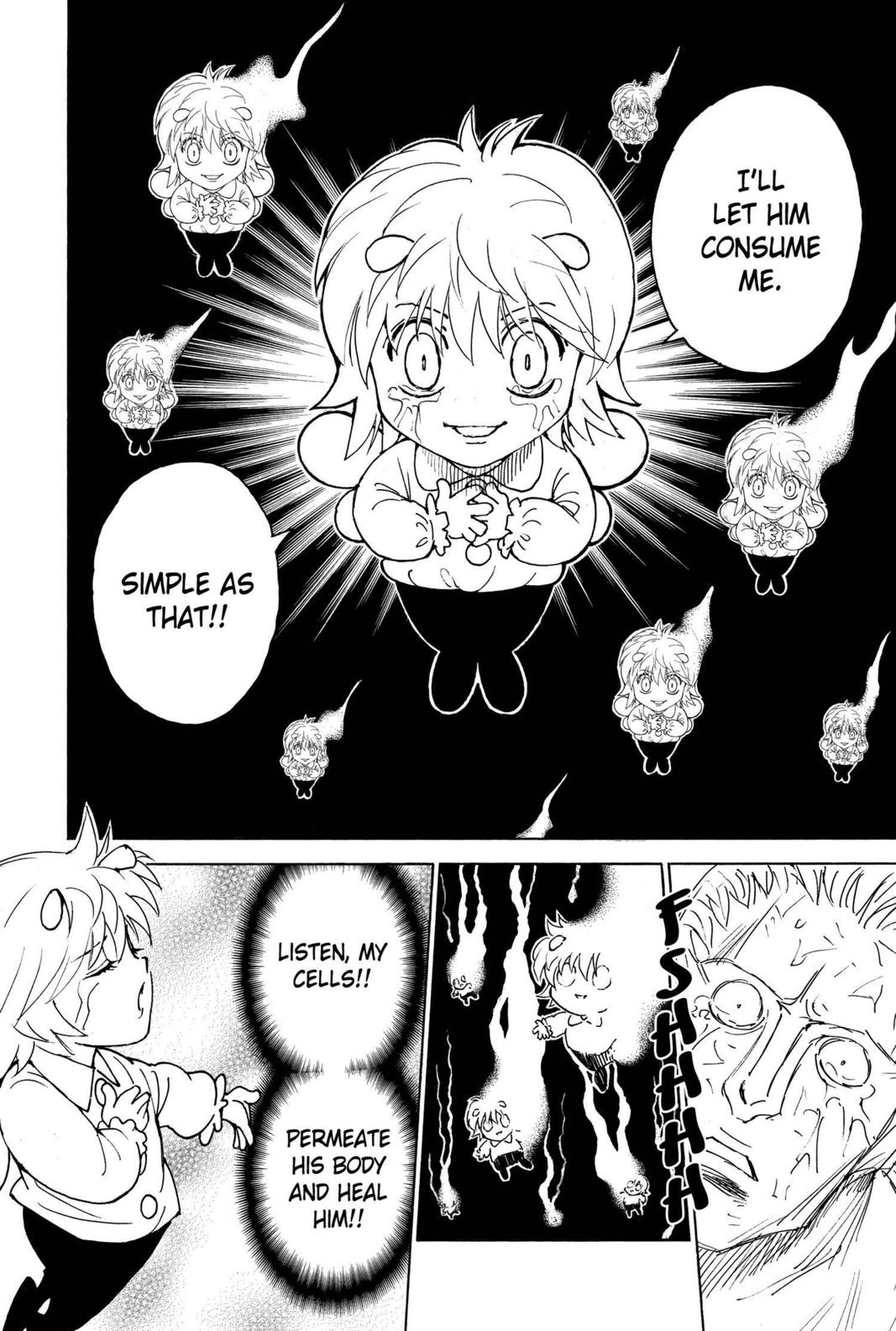
Chapter 299: Regeneration

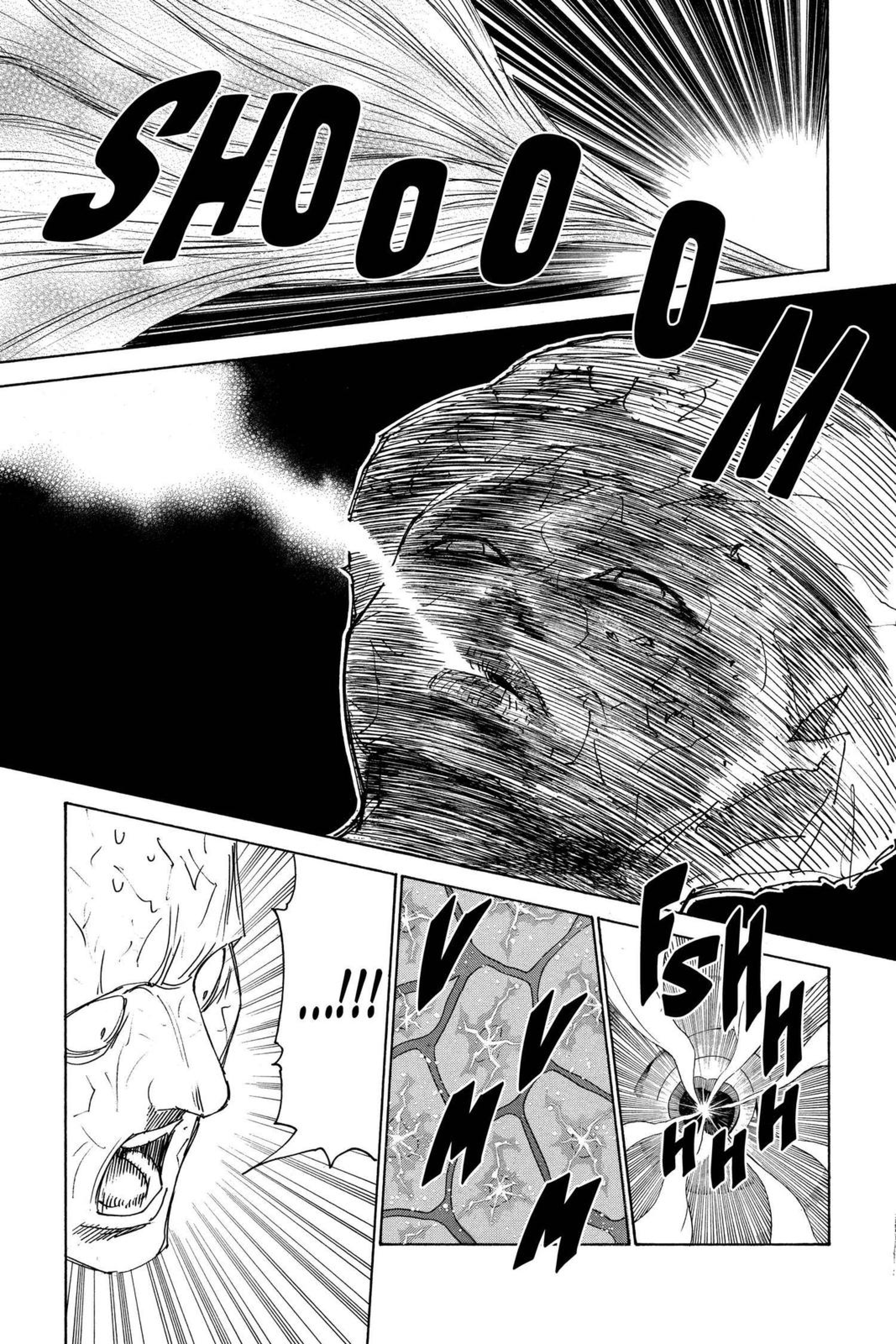

YOUPI'S HOWL...
...FORETOLD NOTHING GOOD.
BEFORE HE EVEN SAW HIM...
...POUF'S FACE WAS COVERED IN TEARS.


ARGH!
NO!
NO!
NO!
NO!
SIRE!

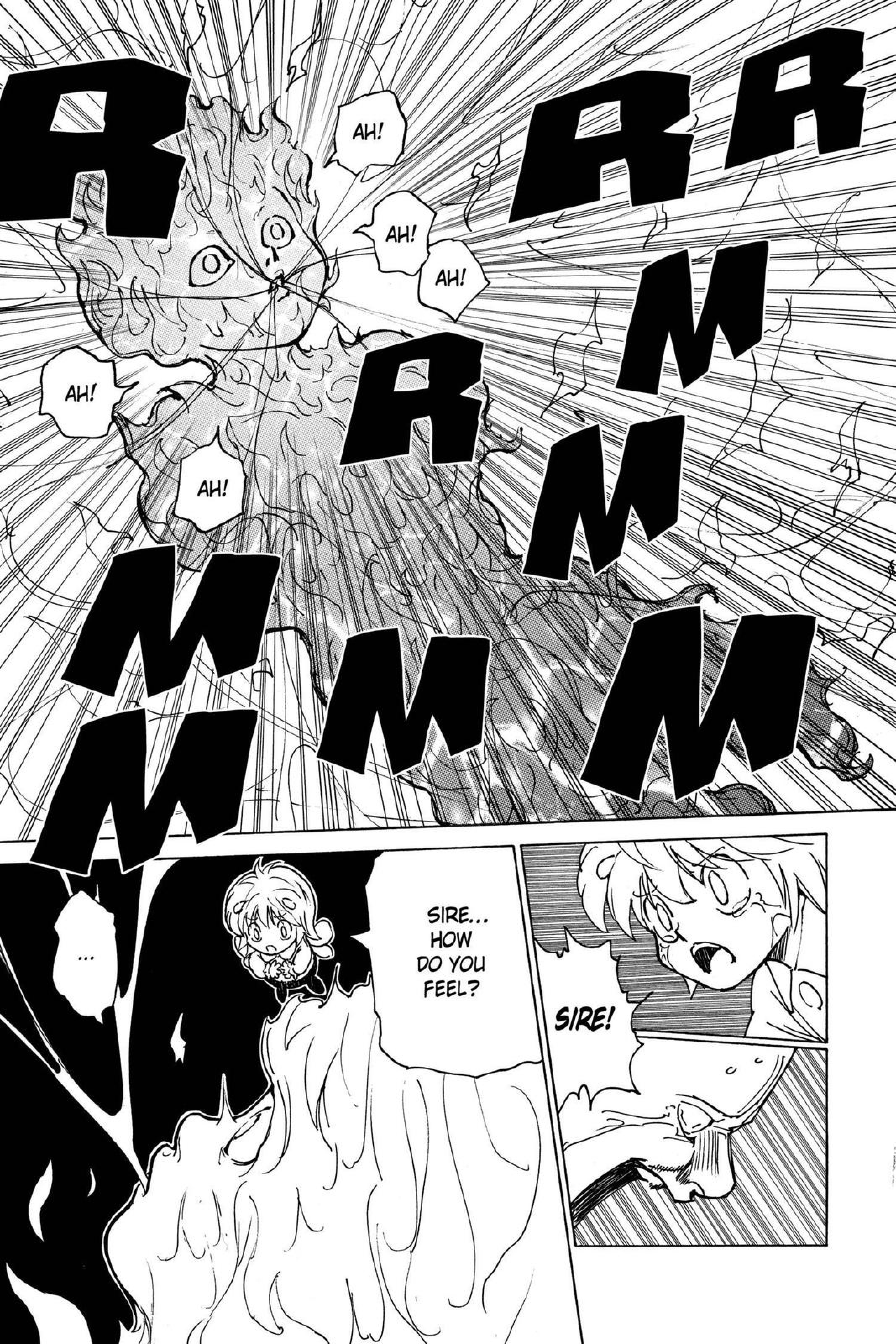

HE'S ALIVE!!
BUT...
LOOK AT HIM!!
WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING!!

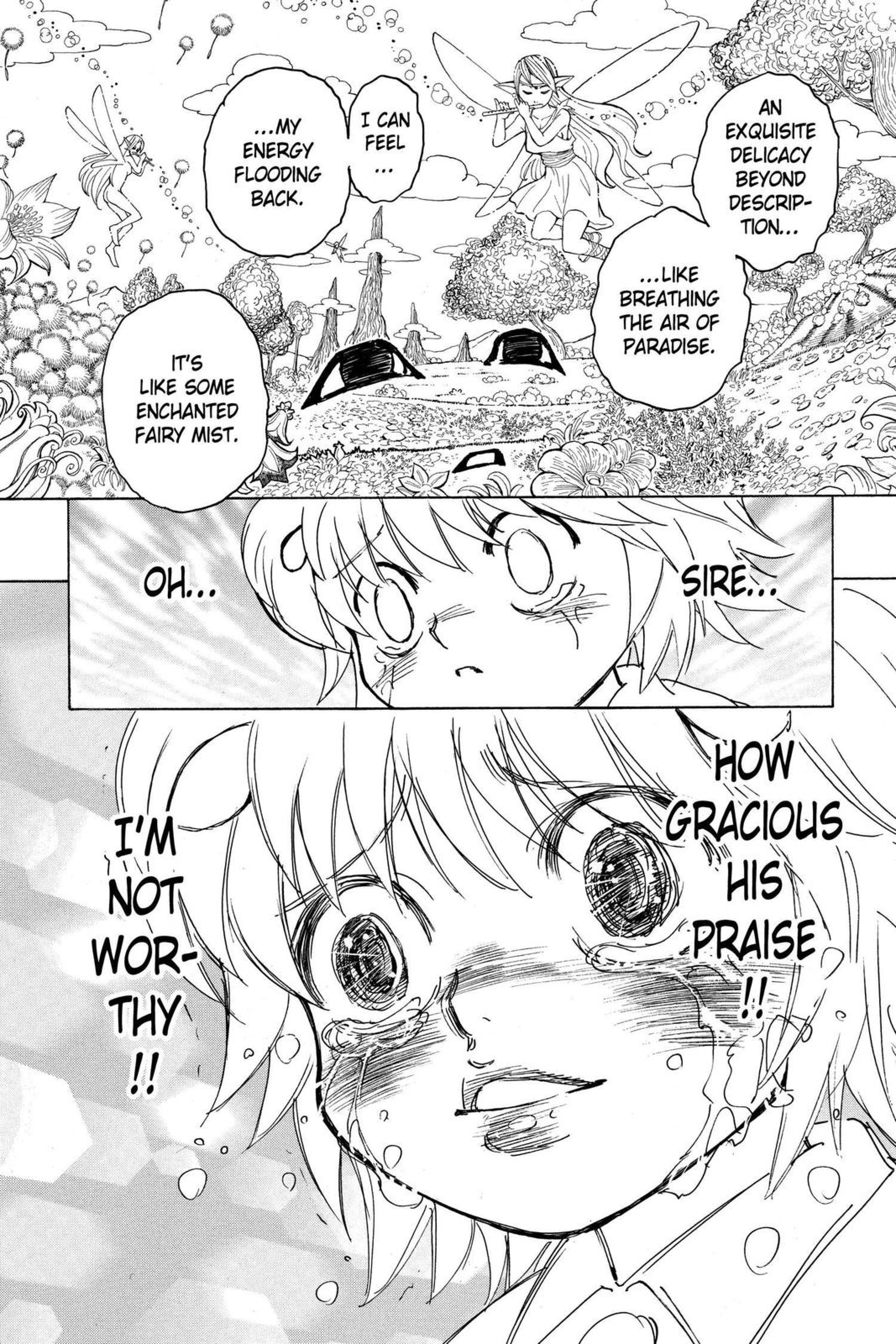

THERE'S NO WAY WE CAN SAVE HIM IN TIME!!
WE CAN'T MAKE IT BACK TO PITOU FAST ENOUGH!!
IT'S ALL RIGHT!!
I'LL SAVE THE KING!!
BUT HOW?

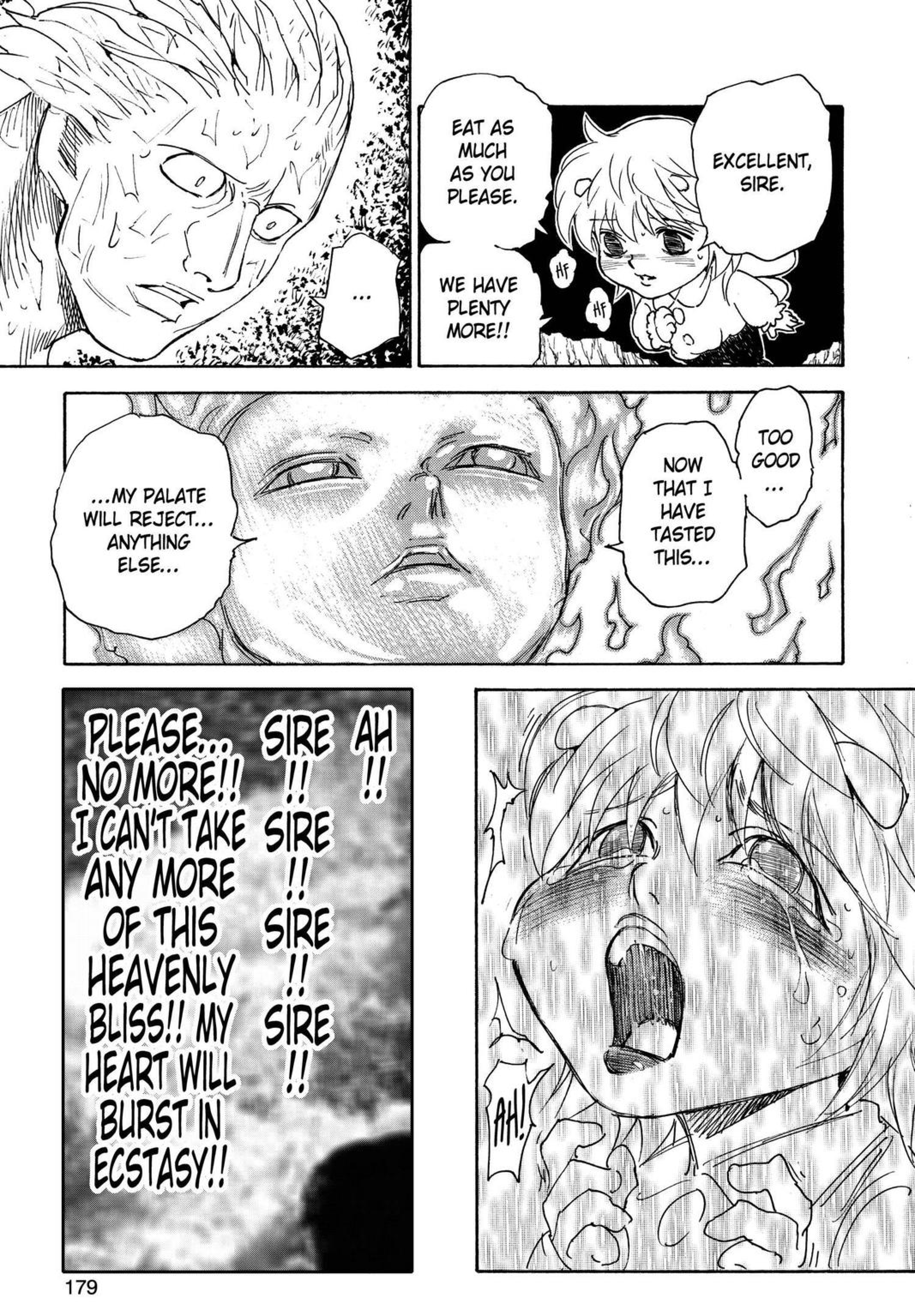

I'LL LET HIM CONSUME ME.
SIMPLE AS THAT!!
FSHHHH
LISTEN, MY CELLS!!
PERMEATE HIS BODY AND HEAL HIM!!

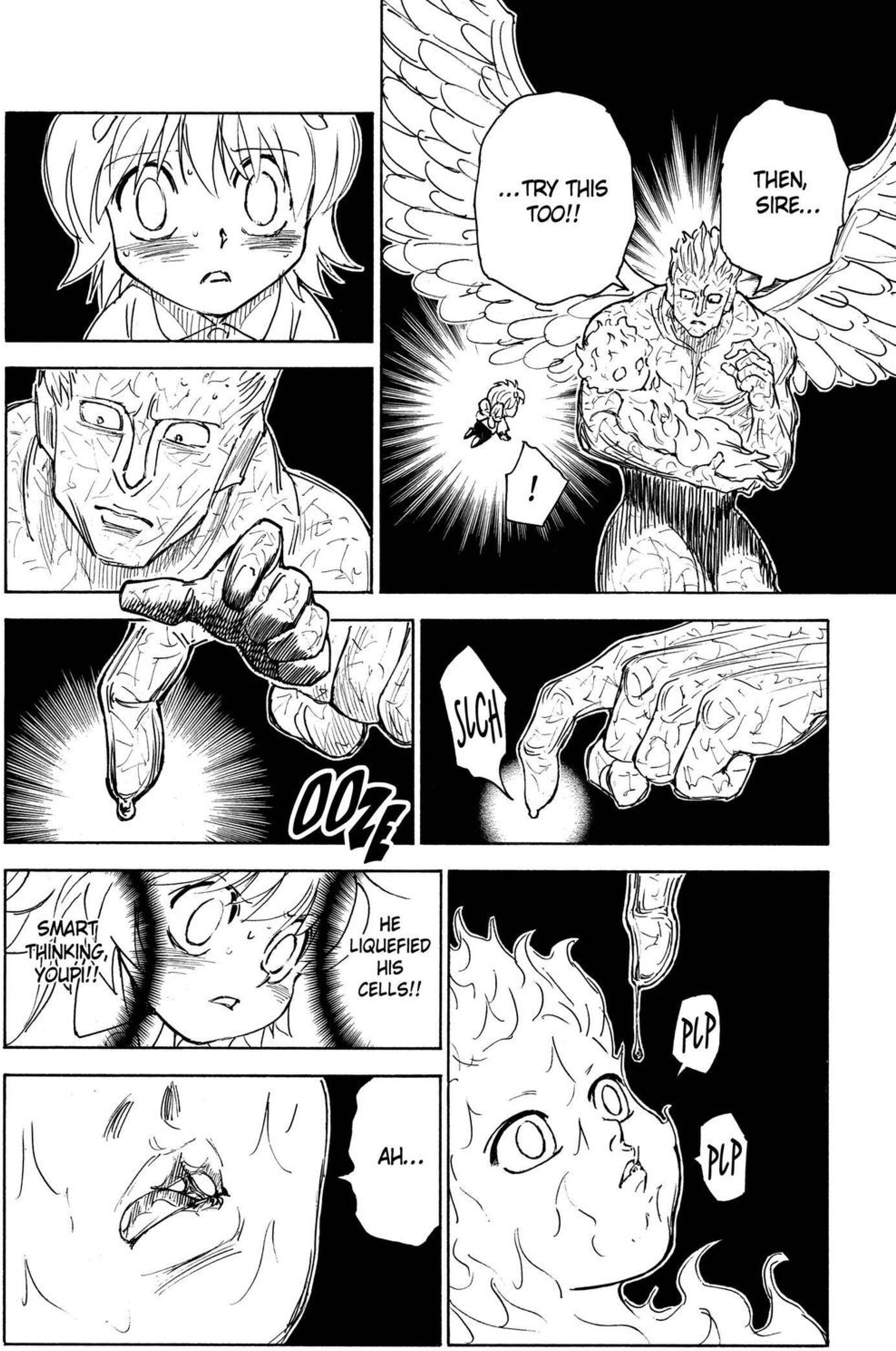

SHOOOOM
FSHHHHHHH
VVVMMM
...!!!

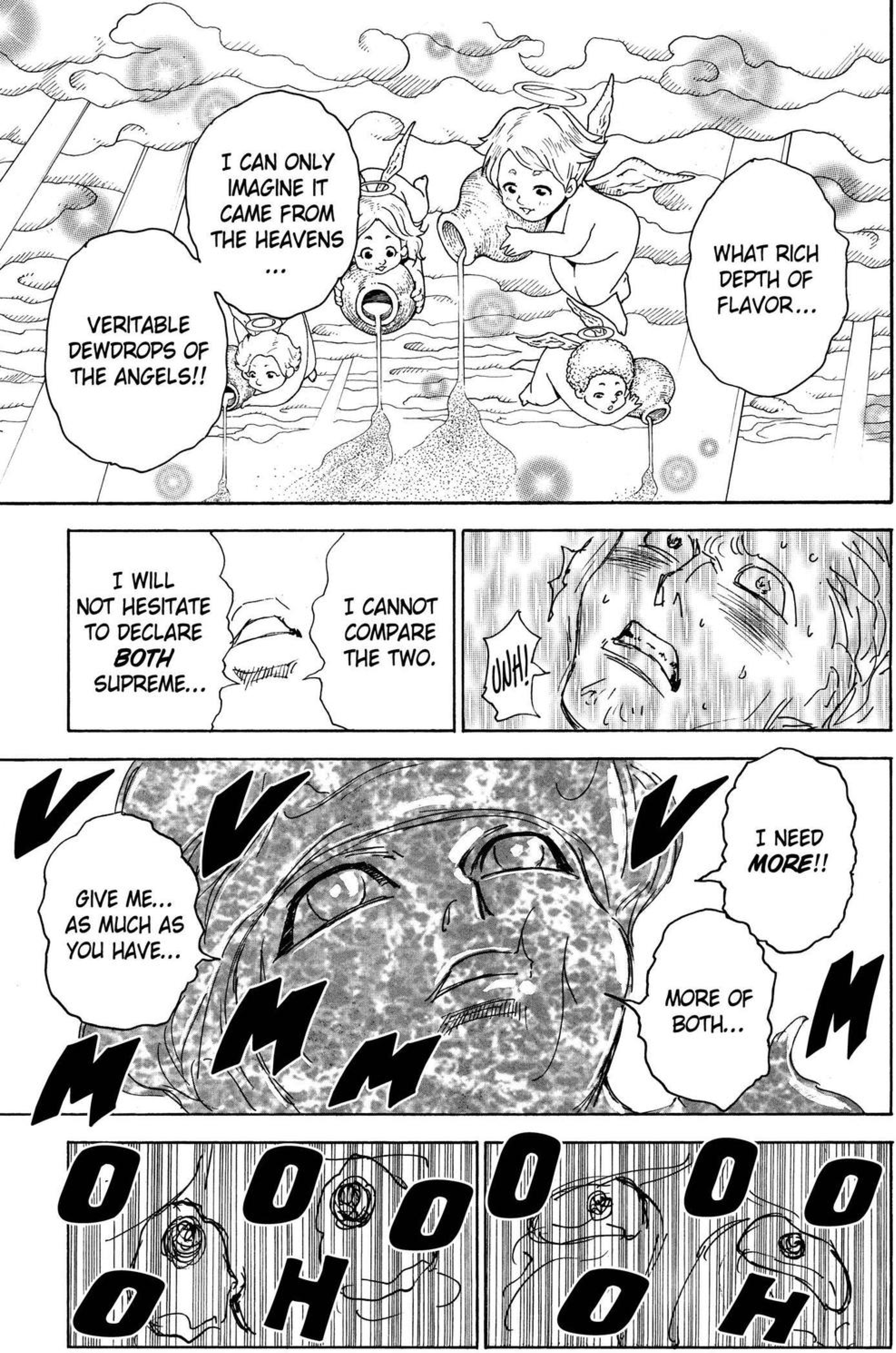
FSHHHHHHH
VVMMMM
FSHHHHHH
NH.
VVMM

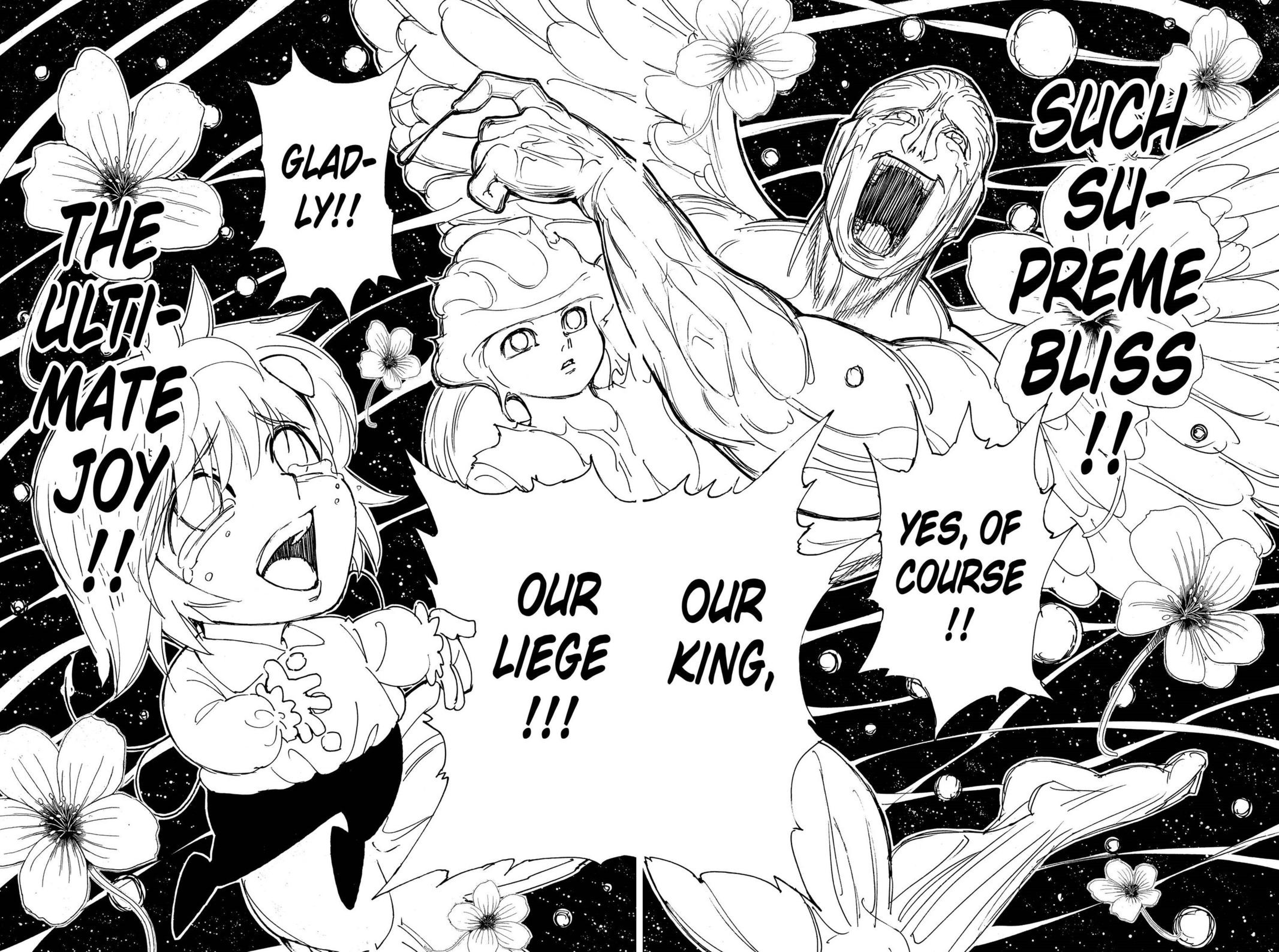

RRRRMMMMMM
AH!
AH!
AH!
AH!
AH!
SIRE!
SIRE… HOW DO YOU FEEL?
…

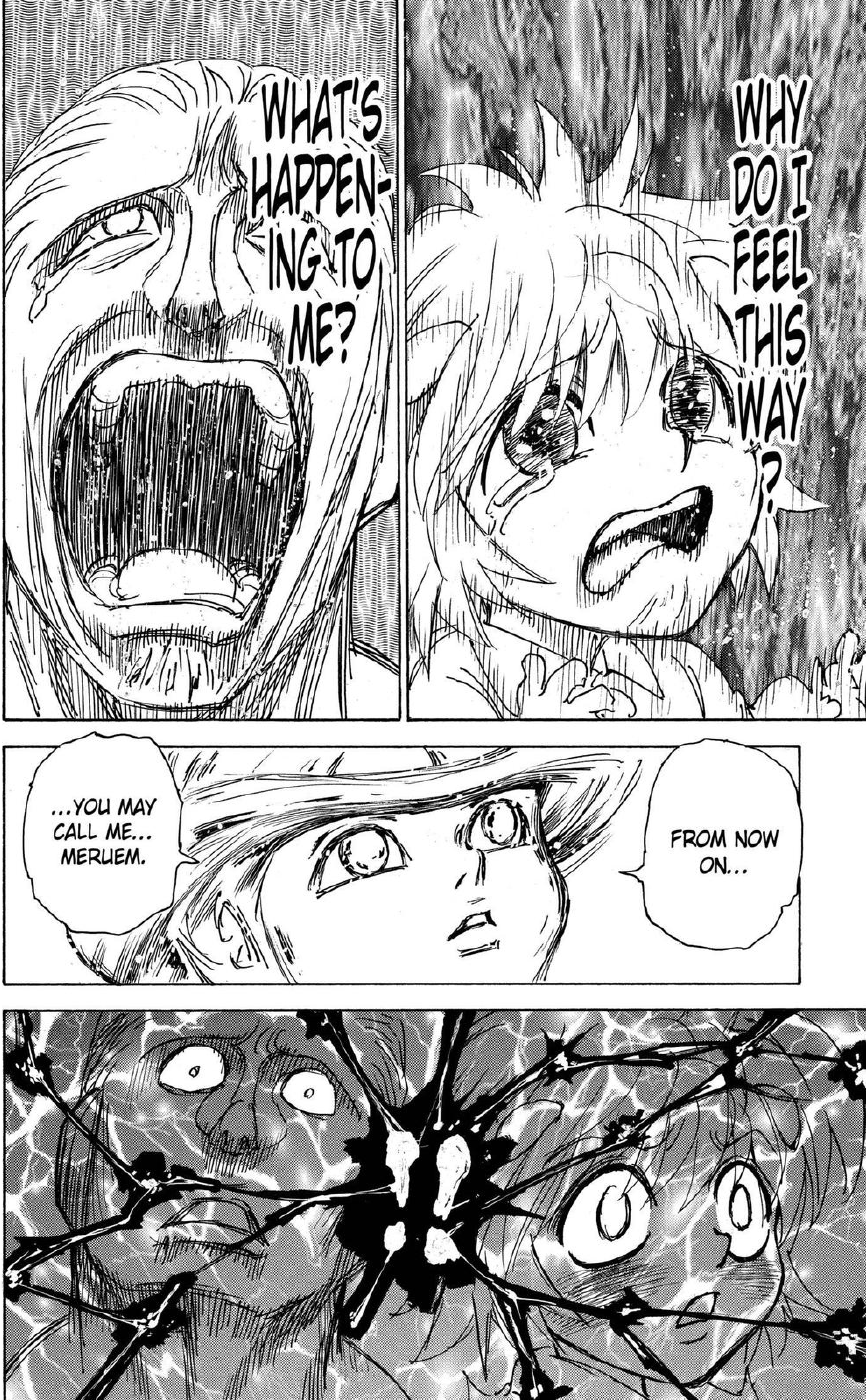

AN EXQUISITE DELICACY BEYOND DESCRIPTION...
...LIKE BREATHING THE AIR OF PARADISE.
I CAN FEEL ...
...MY ENERGY FLOODING BACK.
IT'S LIKE SOME ENCHANTED FAIRY MIST.
SIRE...
OH...
HOW GRACIOUS HIS PRAISE!!
I'M NOT WORTHY!!

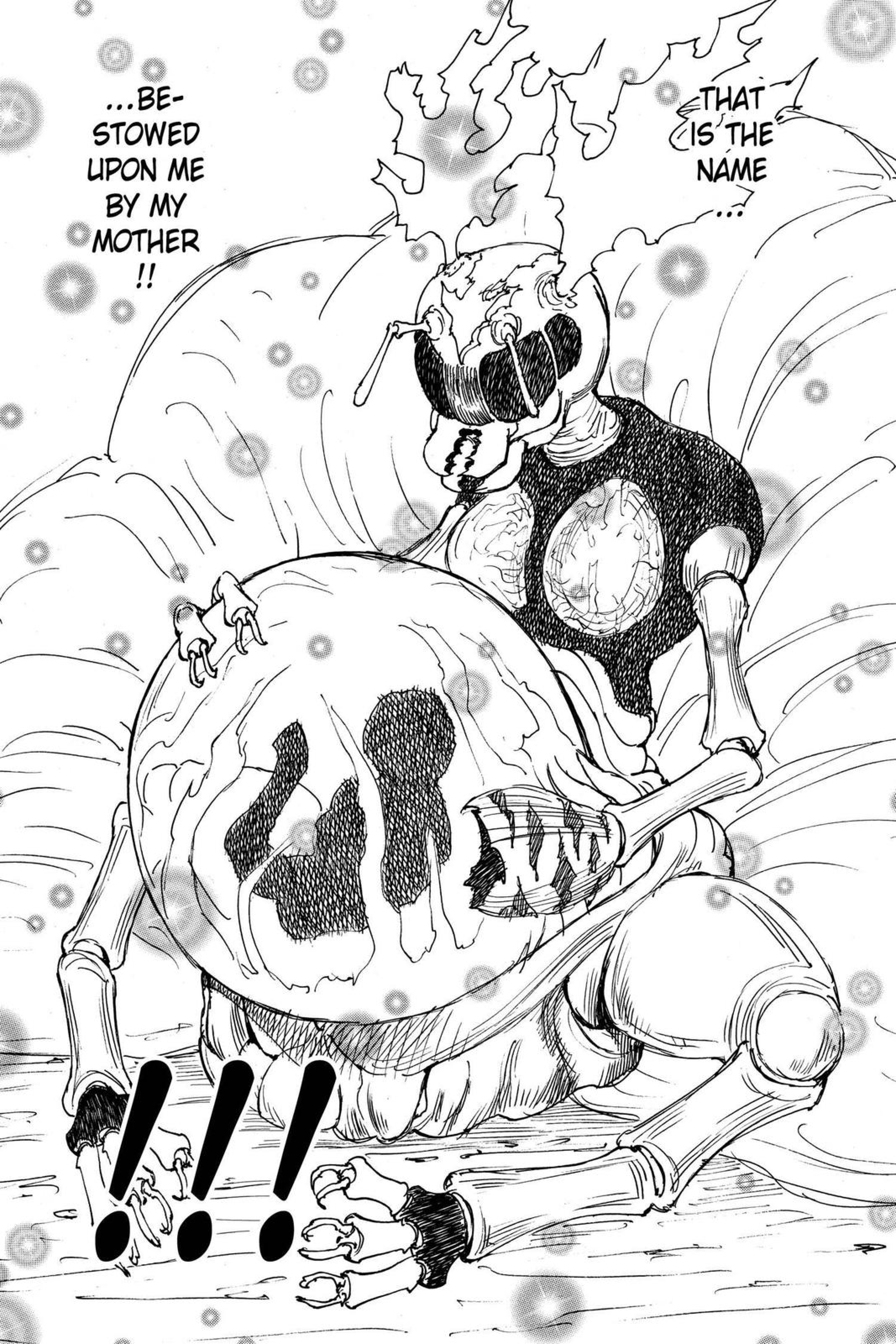

EXCELLENT, SIRE.
HF
HF
EAT AS MUCH AS YOU PLEASE.
WE HAVE PLENTY MORE!!
...
TOO GOOD...
NOW THAT I HAVE TASTED THIS...
...MY PALATE WILL REJECT... ANYTHING ELSE...
AH!
AH!!
SIRE!! SIRE!! SIRE!! SIRE!!
PLEASE... NO MORE!! I CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE OF THIS HEAVENLY BLISS!! MY HEART WILL BURST IN ECSTASY!!

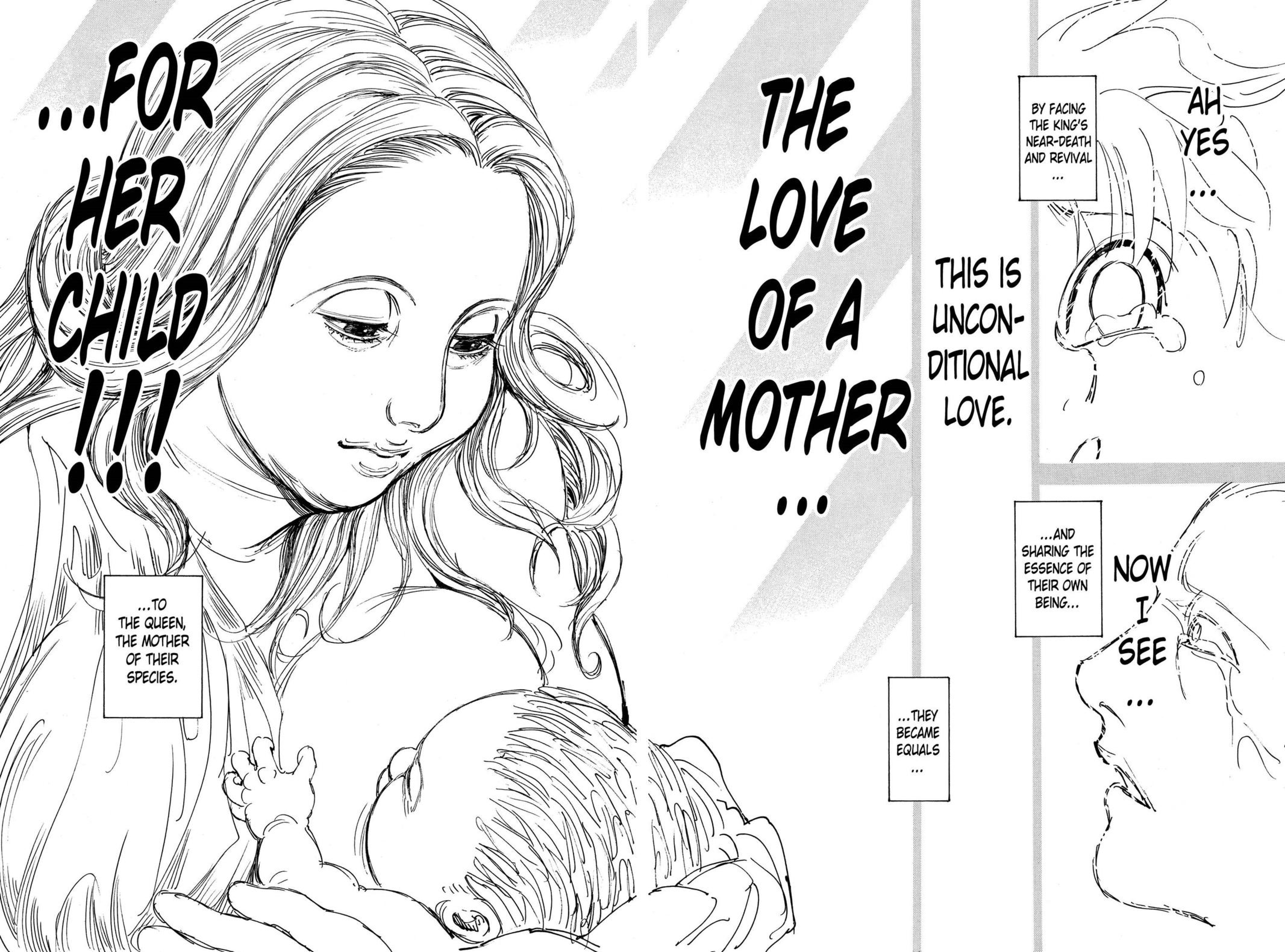

THEN, SIRE...
...TRY THIS TOO!!
!
SLCH
OOZE
PLP
PLP
HE LIQUEFIED HIS CELLS!!
SMART THINKING, YOUPI!!
AH...

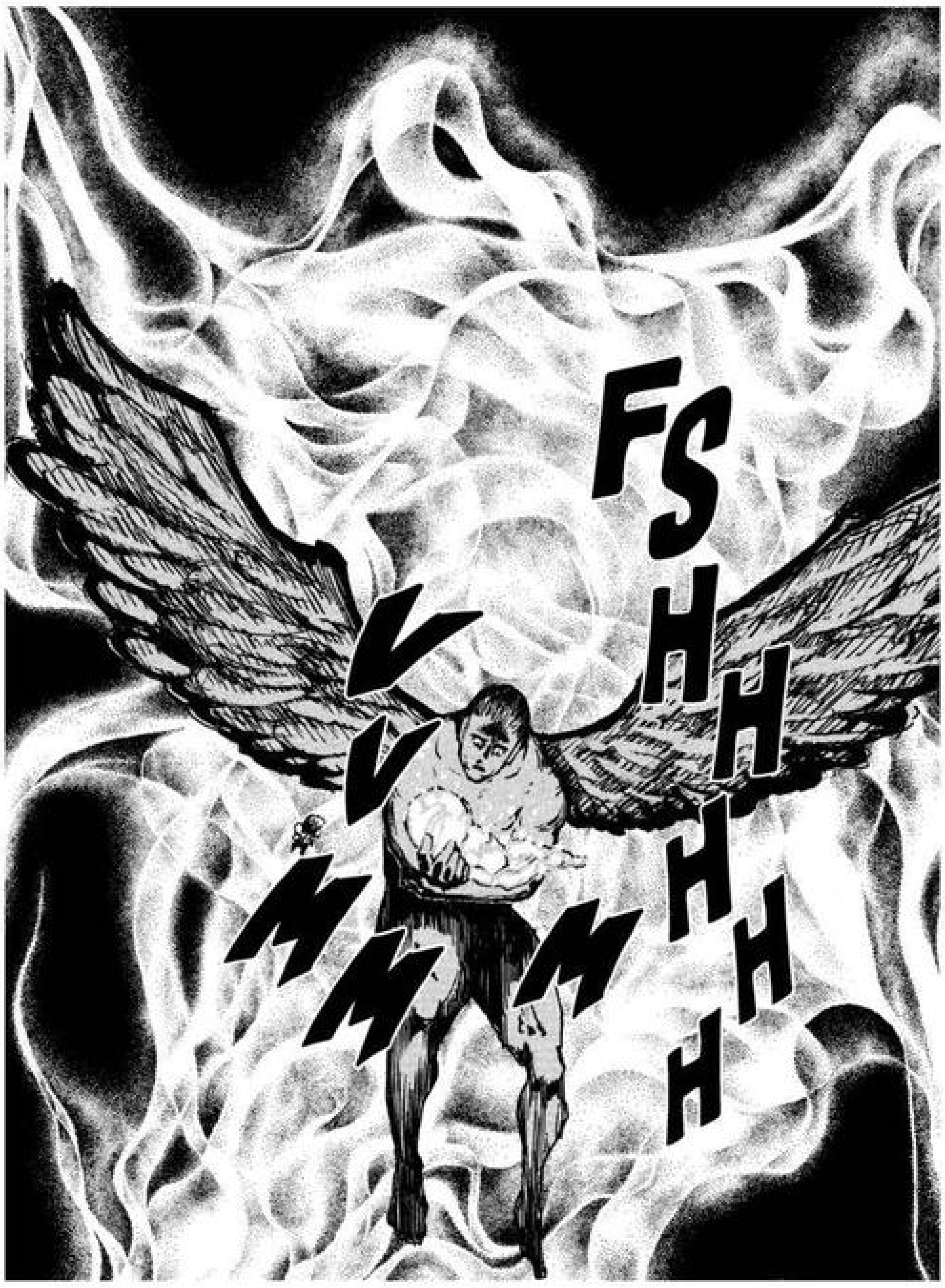

WHAT RICH DEPTH OF FLAVOR…
I CAN ONLY IMAGINE IT CAME FROM THE HEAVENS …
VERITABLE DEWDROPS OF THE ANGELS!!
UNH!
I CANNOT COMPARE THE TWO.
I WILL NOT HESITATE TO DECLARE **BOTH** SUPREME…
I NEED **MORE**!!
MORE OF BOTH…
GIVE ME… AS MUCH AS YOU HAVE…
VVVMMMMMM
OOOOOH
OOOOOH

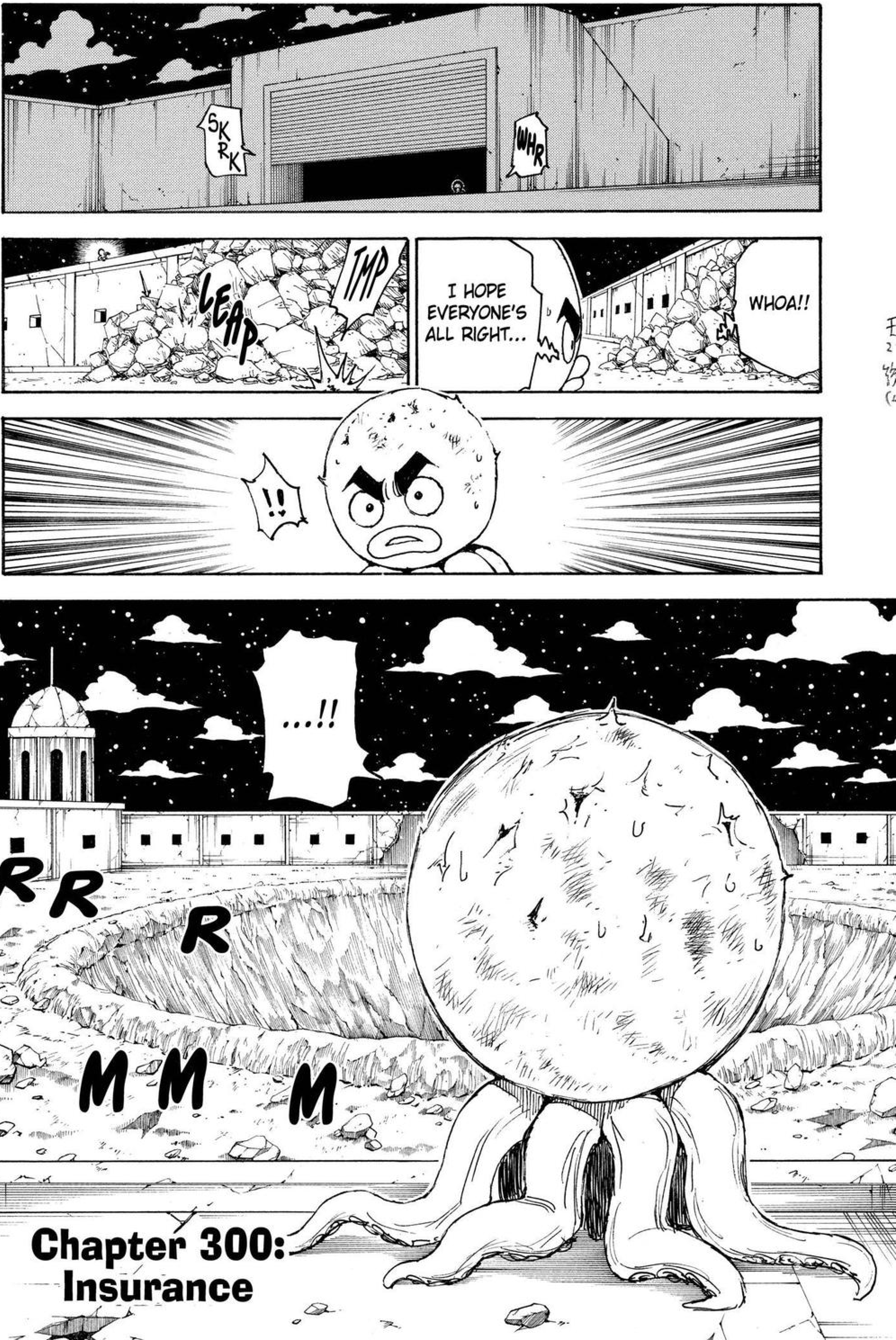

SUCH SUPREME BLISS!!
YES, OF COURSE!!
OUR KING,
GLADLY!!
OUR LIEGE!!!
THE ULTIMATE JOY!!


WHY DO I FEEL THIS WAY?
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME?
FROM NOW ON...
...YOU MAY CALL ME... MERUEM.

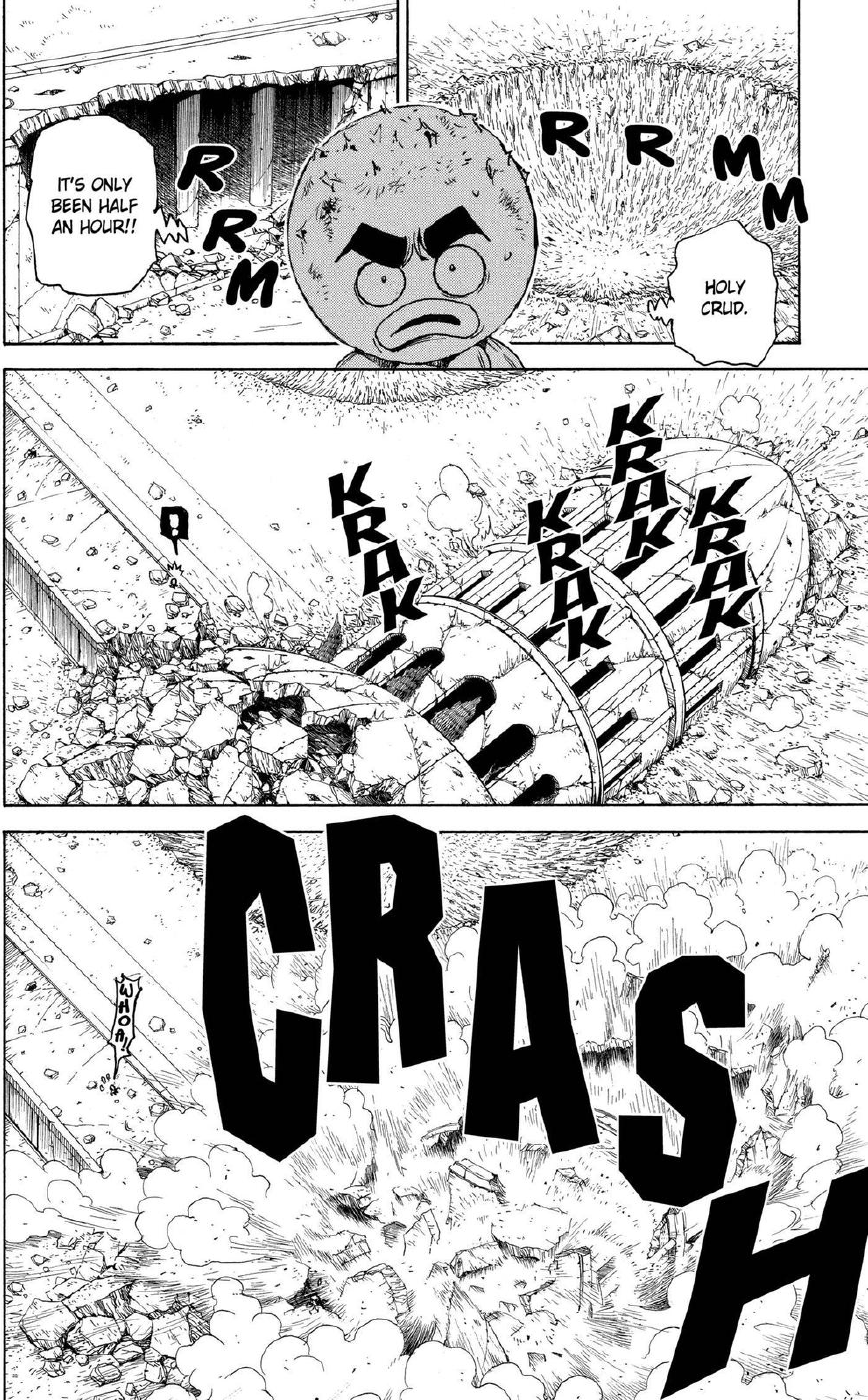

THAT IS THE NAME ...
...BE-STOWED UPON ME BY MY MOTHER !!
!!!


AH YES ...
BY FACING THE KING'S NEAR-DEATH AND REVIVAL ...
NOW I SEE ...
...AND SHARING THE ESSENCE OF THEIR OWN BEING...
...THEY BECAME EQUALS ...
THIS IS UNCONDITIONAL LOVE.
THE LOVE OF A MOTHER ...
...FOR HER CHILD!!!
...TO THE QUEEN, THE MOTHER OF THEIR SPECIES.

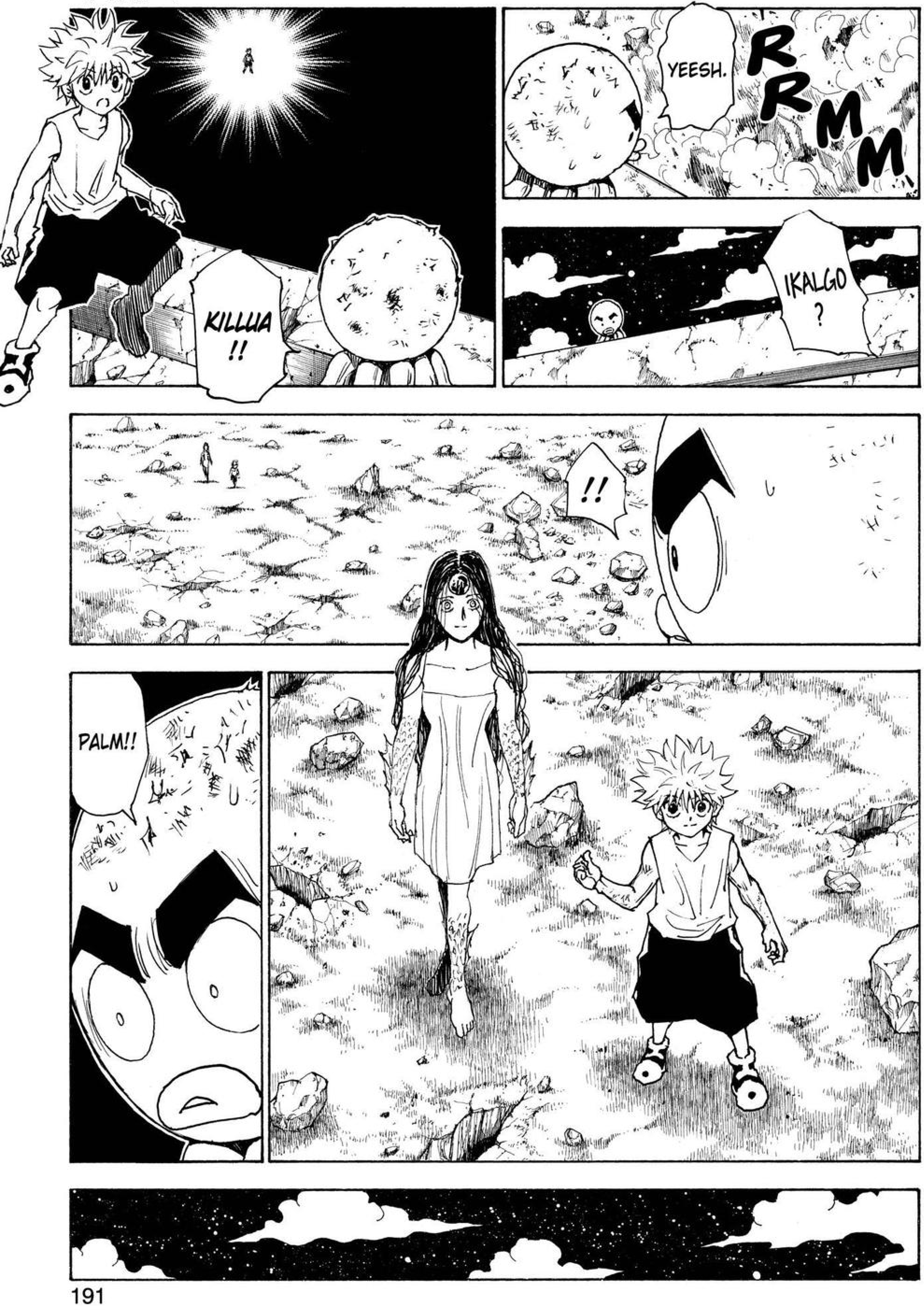

FSHHHHHH
VVMMMM

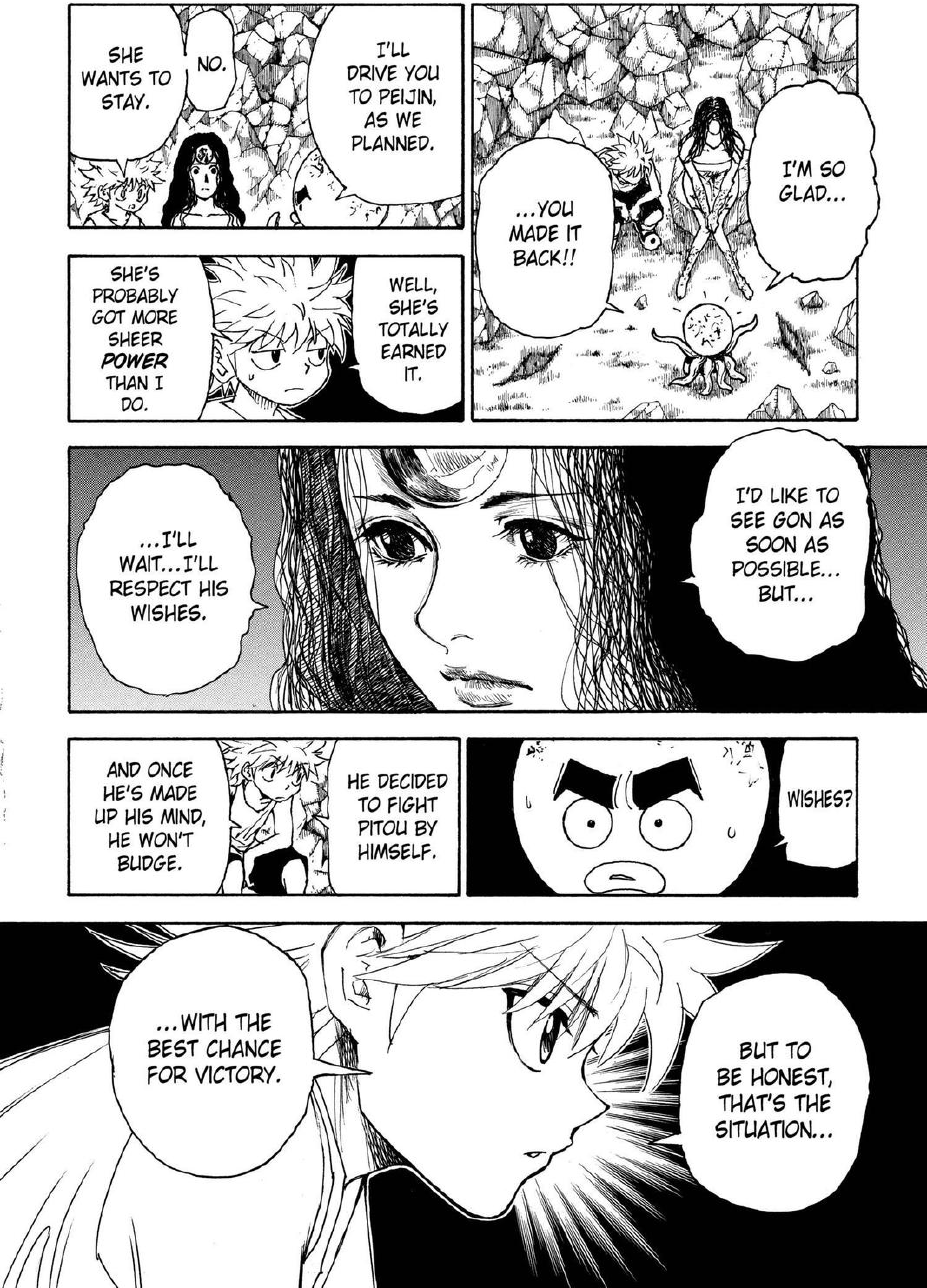

WHR
SKRK
WHOA!!
I HOPE EVERYONE'S ALL RIGHT...
TMP
LEAP
!!
...!!
RRR
MMM

Chapter 300: Insurance

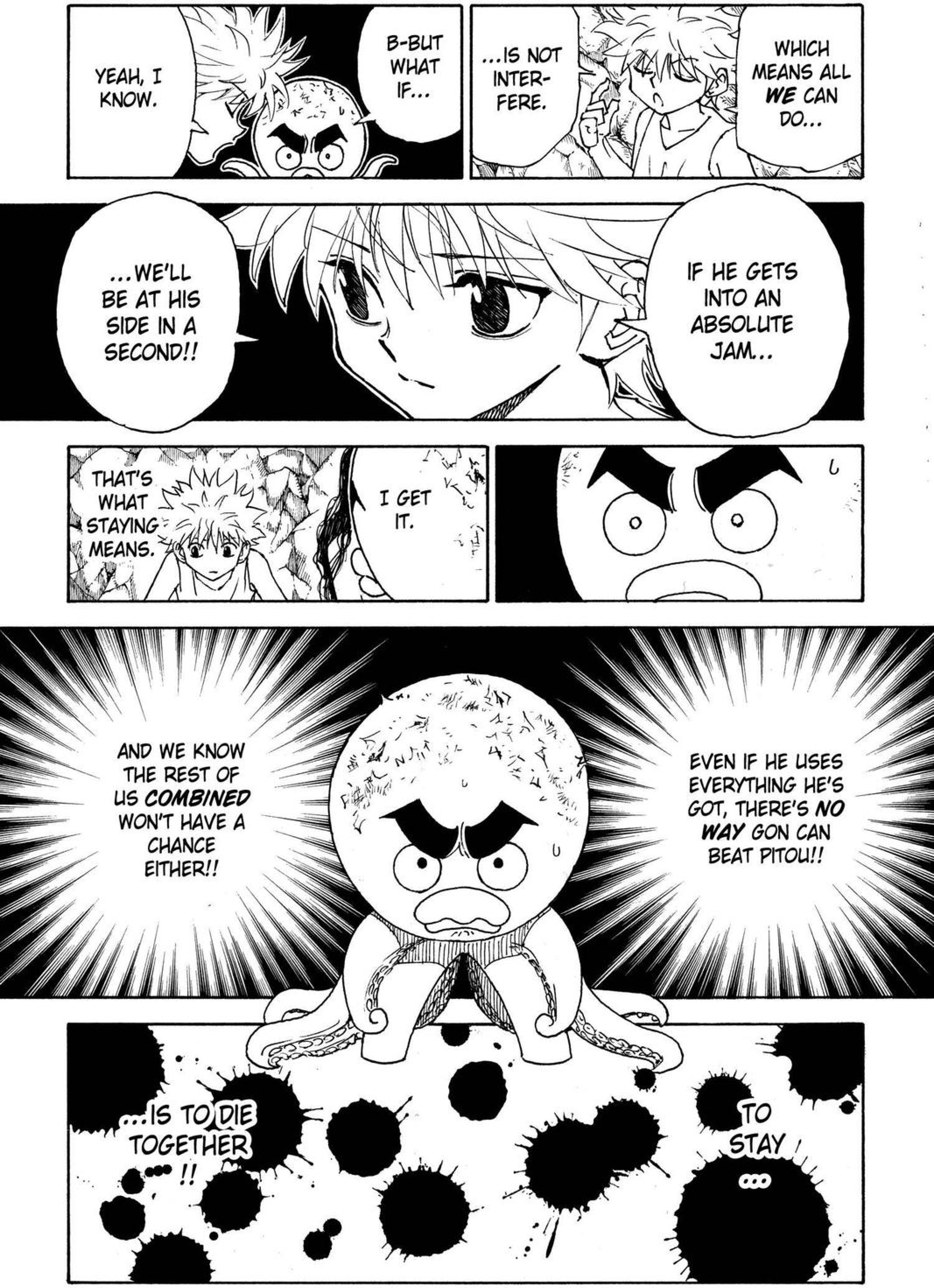

RRRMMM
HOLY CRUD.
RRM
IT'S ONLY BEEN HALF AN HOUR!!
KRAK KRAK KRAK KRAK
CRASH
WHOA!!

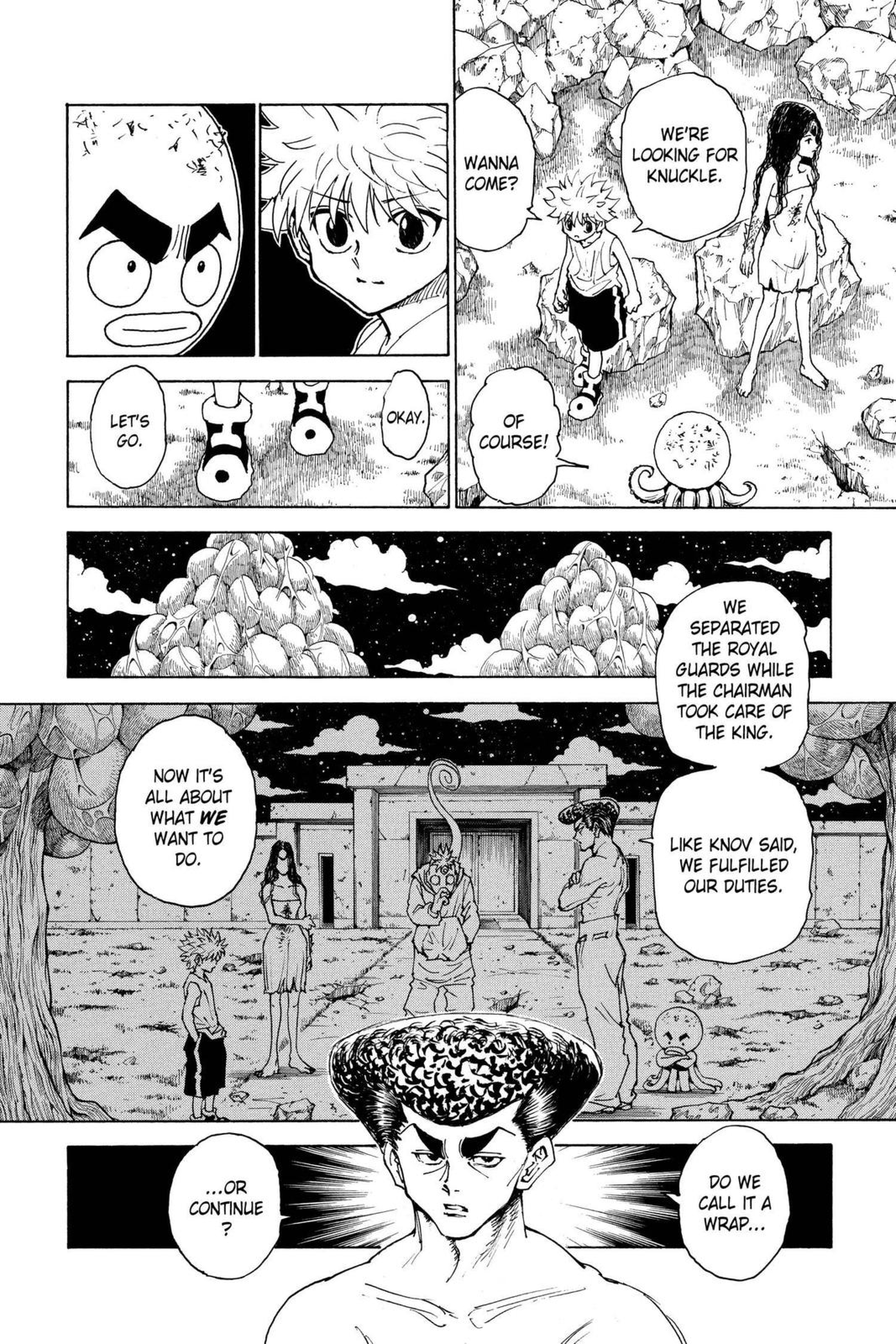
READ THIS WAY

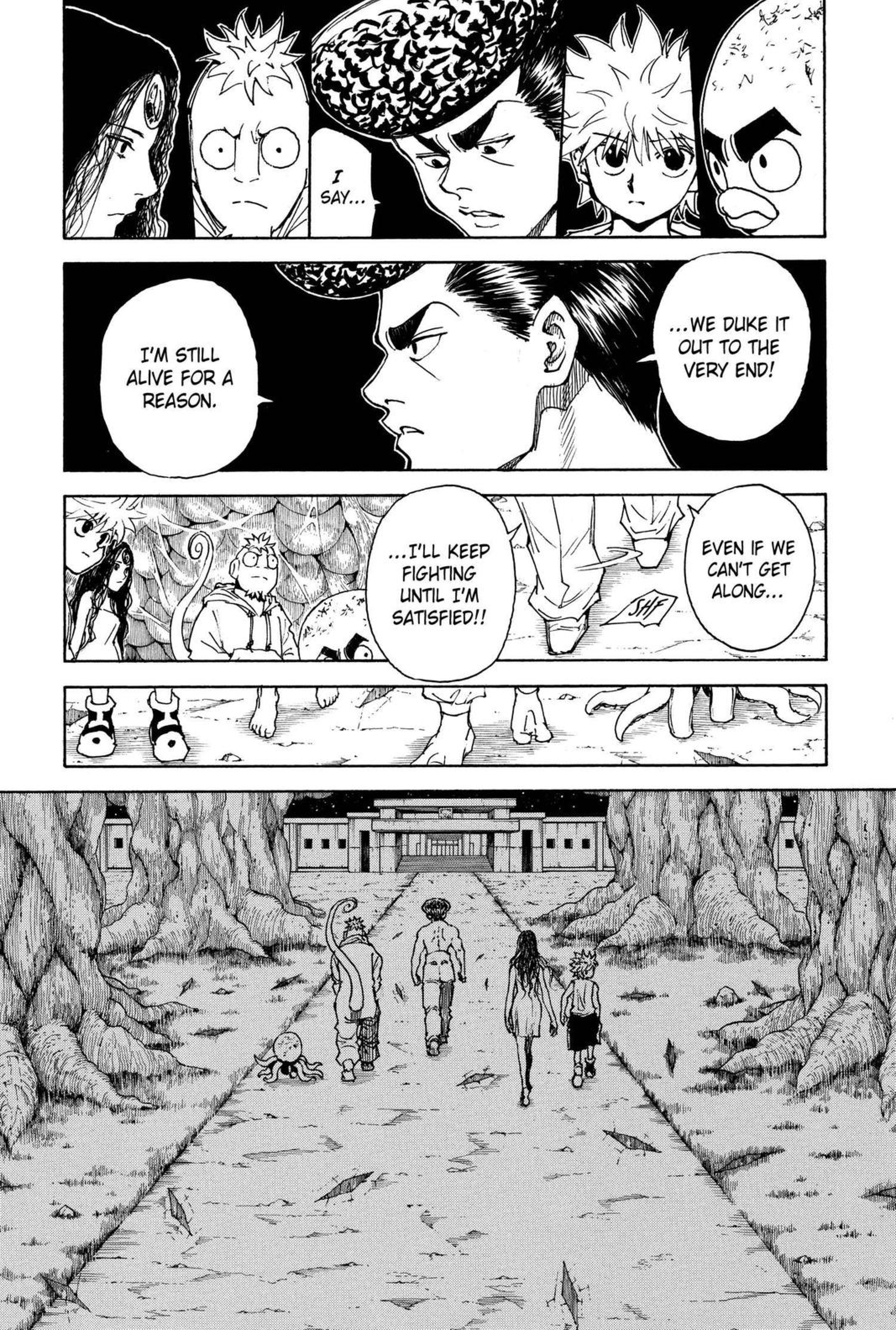

YEESH.
RRMM
KILLUA!!
IKALGO?
!!
PALM!!

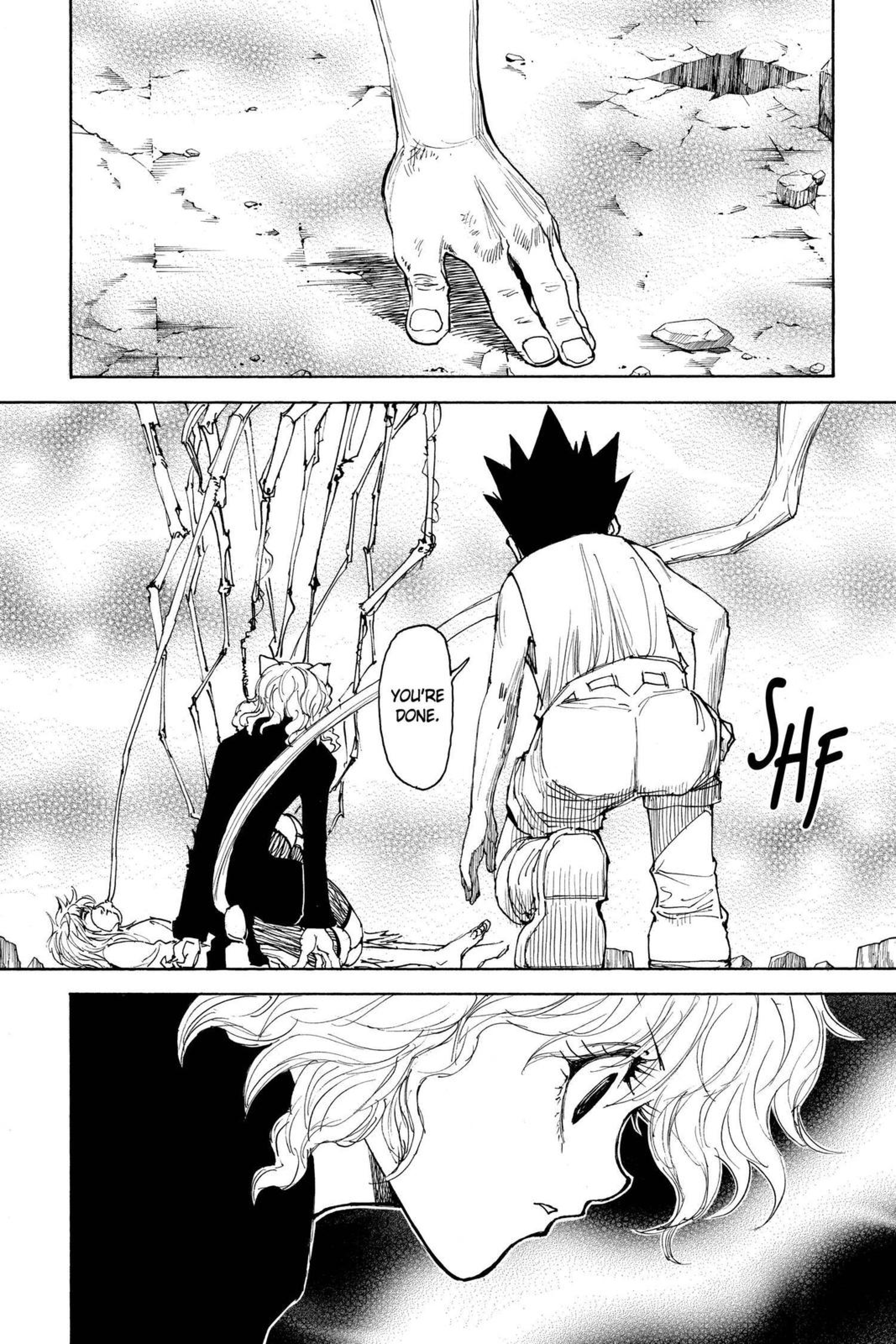

I'M SO GLAD...
...YOU MADE IT BACK!!
I'LL DRIVE YOU TO PEIJIN, AS WE PLANNED.
NO.
SHE WANTS TO STAY.
WELL, SHE'S TOTALLY EARNED IT.
SHE'S PROBABLY GOT MORE SHEER **POWER** THAN I DO.
I'D LIKE TO SEE GON AS SOON AS POSSIBLE... BUT...
...I'LL WAIT...I'LL RESPECT HIS WISHES.
WISHES?
HE DECIDED TO FIGHT PITOU BY HIMSELF.
AND ONCE HE'S MADE UP HIS MIND, HE WON'T BUDGE.
BUT TO BE HONEST, THAT'S THE SITUATION...
...WITH THE BEST CHANCE FOR VICTORY.

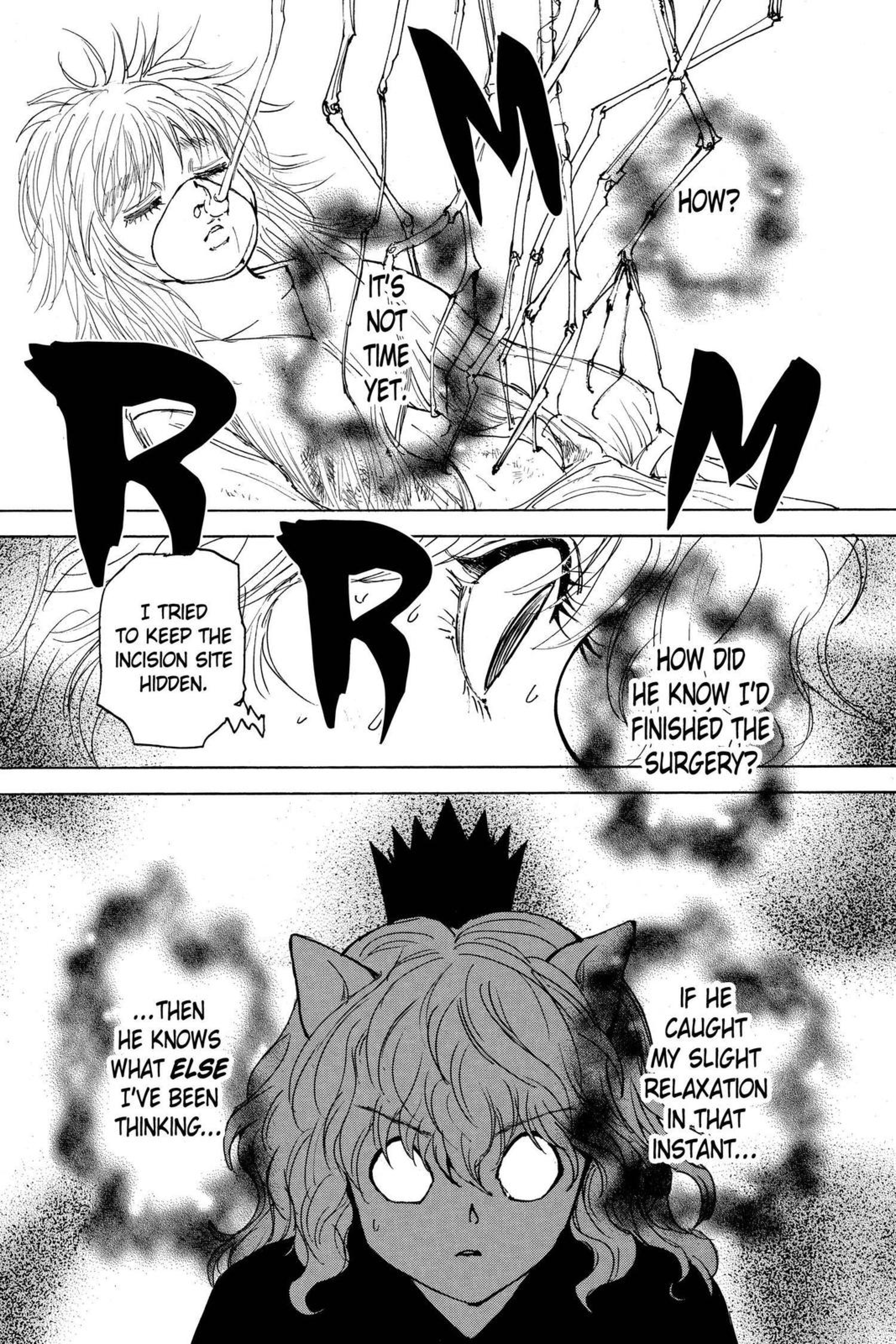
READ THIS WAY

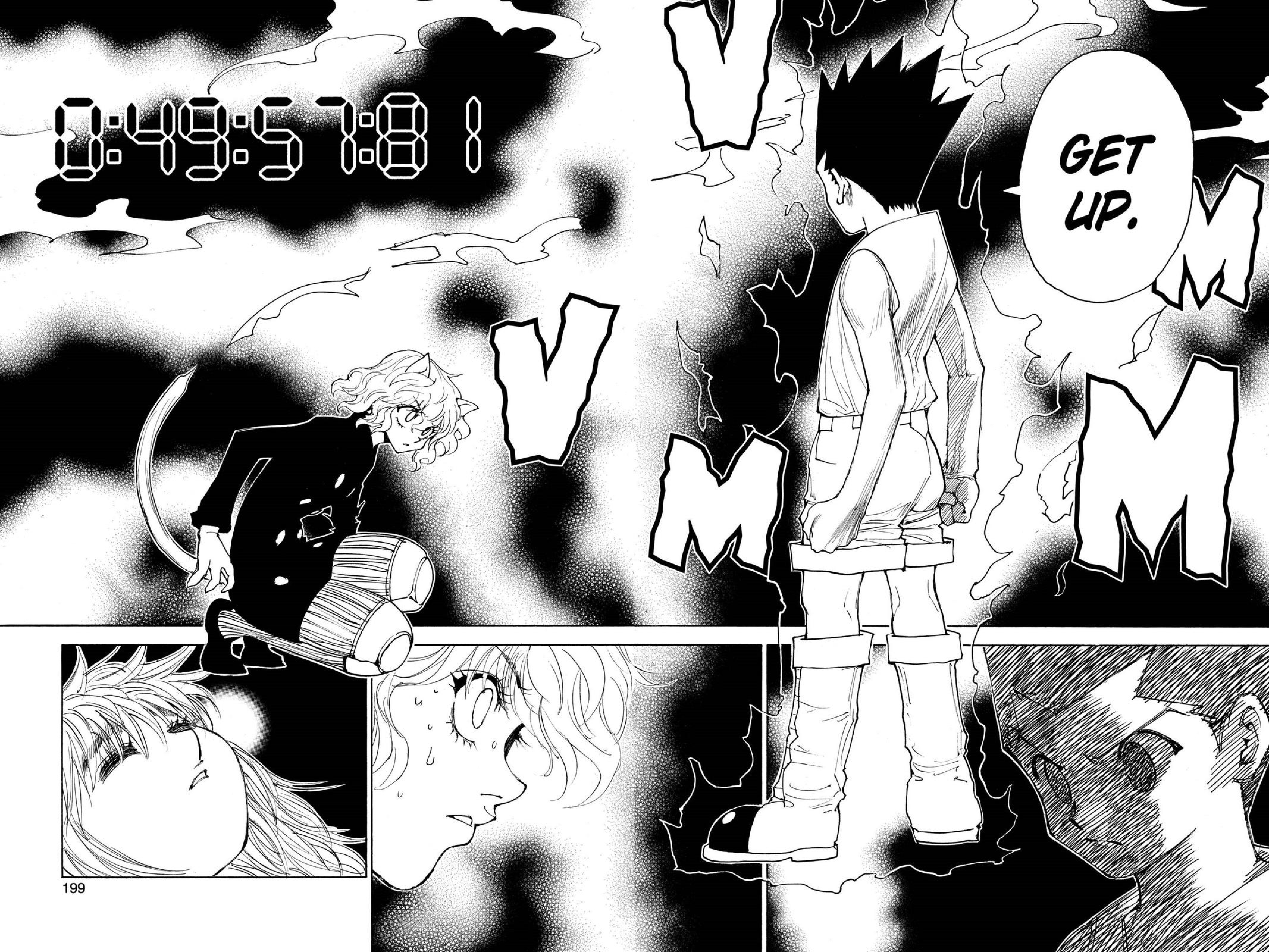

WHICH MEANS ALL WE CAN DO...
...IS NOT INTERFERE.
B-BUT WHAT IF...
YEAH, I KNOW.
IF HE GETS INTO AN ABSOLUTE JAM...
...WE'LL BE AT HIS SIDE IN A SECOND!!
I GET IT.
THAT'S WHAT STAYING MEANS.
EVEN IF HE USES EVERYTHING HE'S GOT, THERE'S NO WAY GON CAN BEAT PITOU!!
AND WE KNOW THE REST OF US COMBINED WON'T HAVE A CHANCE EITHER!!
TO STAY...
...IS TO DIE TOGETHER...!!

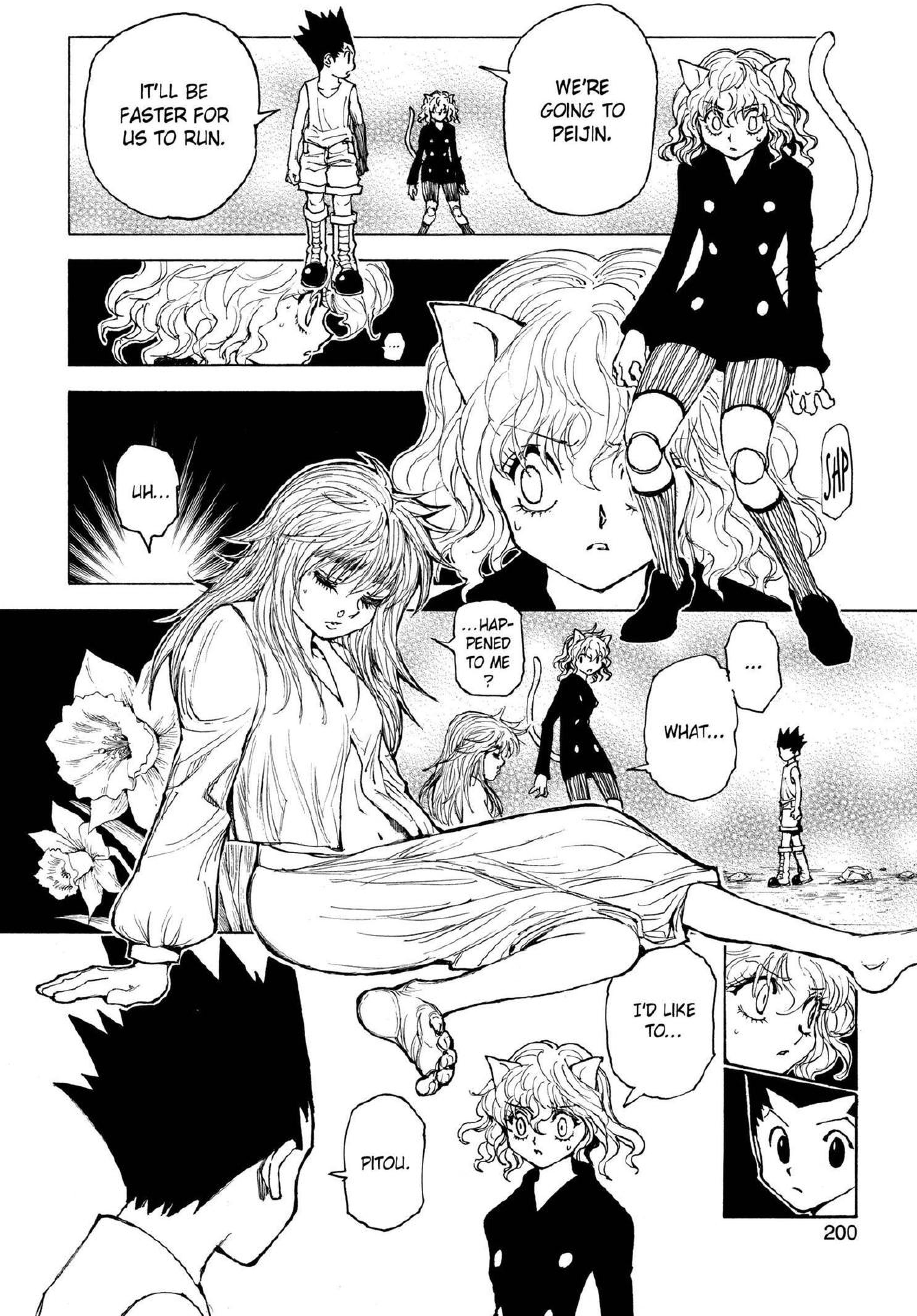

WE'RE LOOKING FOR KNUCKLE.
WANNA COME?
OF COURSE!
OKAY.
LET'S GO.
WE SEPARATED THE ROYAL GUARDS WHILE THE CHAIRMAN TOOK CARE OF THE KING.
LIKE KNOV SAID, WE FULFILLED OUR DUTIES.
NOW IT'S ALL ABOUT WHAT *WE* WANT TO DO.
DO WE CALL IT A WRAP...
...OR CONTINUE?

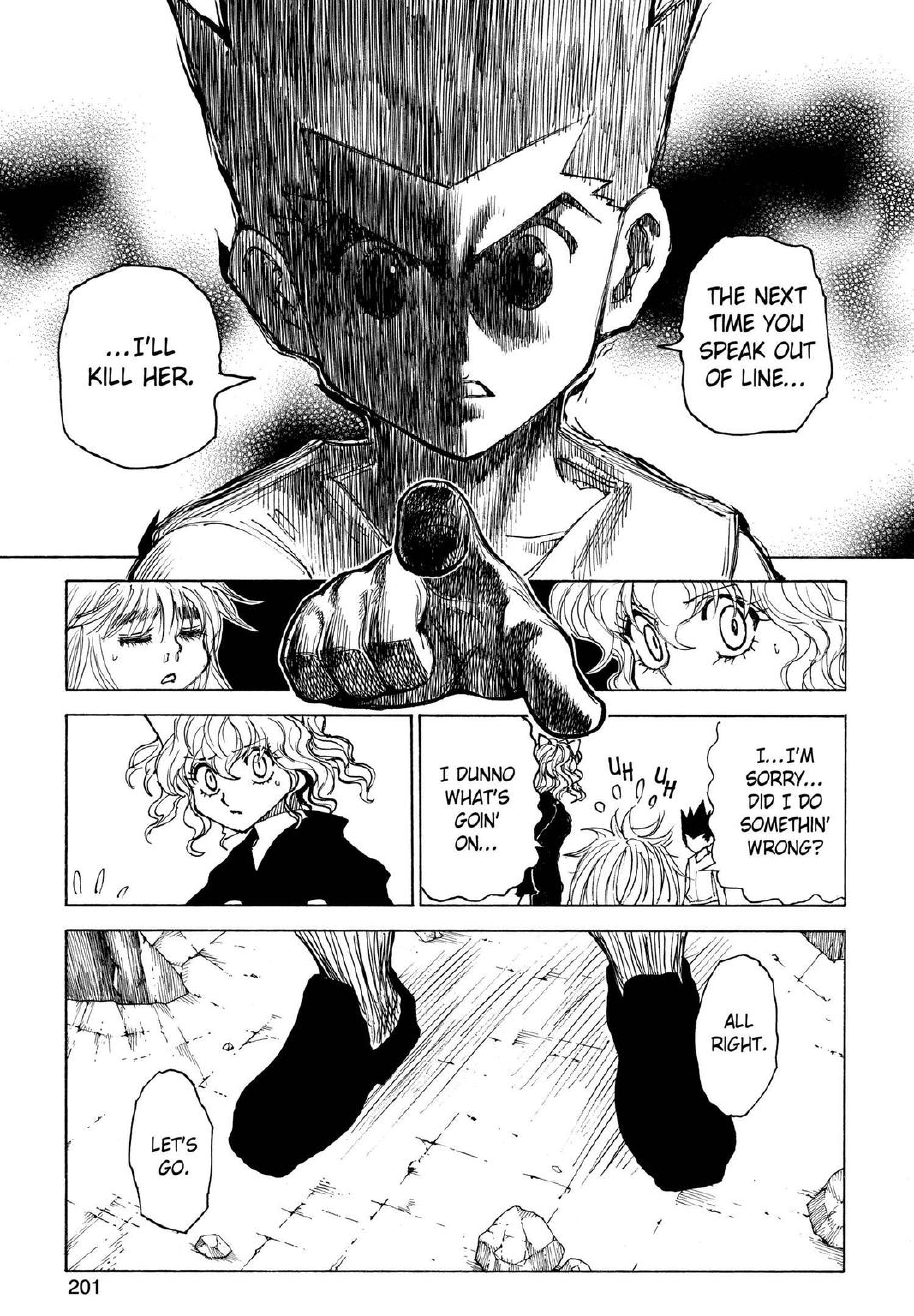

I SAY…
…WE DUKE IT OUT TO THE VERY END!
I'M STILL ALIVE FOR A REASON.
EVEN IF WE CAN'T GET ALONG…
SHF
…I'LL KEEP FIGHTING UNTIL I'M SATISFIED!!

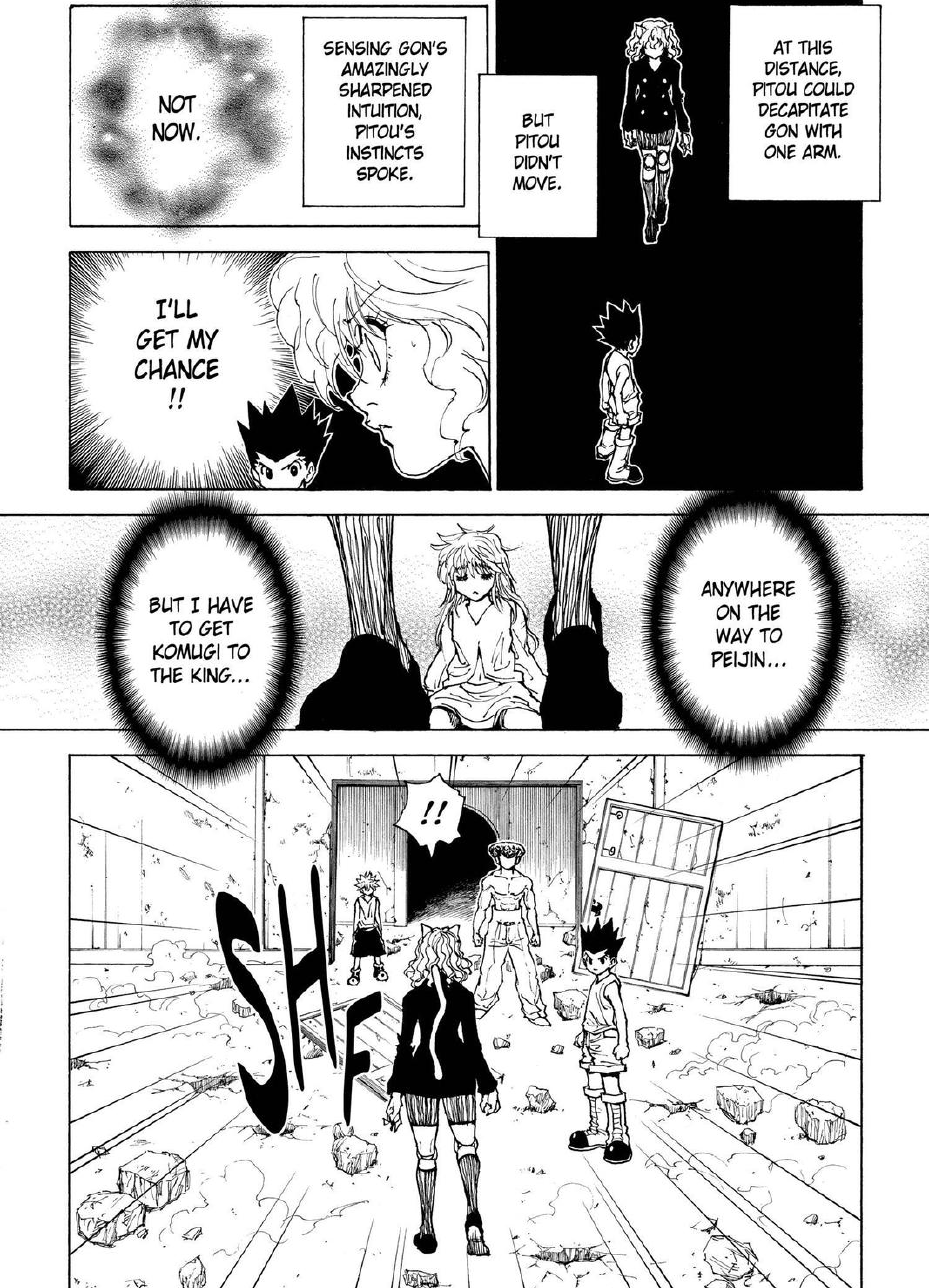

SHF
YOU'RE DONE.


HOW?
IT'S NOT TIME YET.
RRMM
HOW DID HE KNOW I'D FINISHED THE SURGERY?
I TRIED TO KEEP THE INCISION SITE HIDDEN.
IF HE CAUGHT MY SLIGHT RELAXATION IN THAT INSTANT...
...THEN HE KNOWS WHAT *ELSE* I'VE BEEN THINKING...

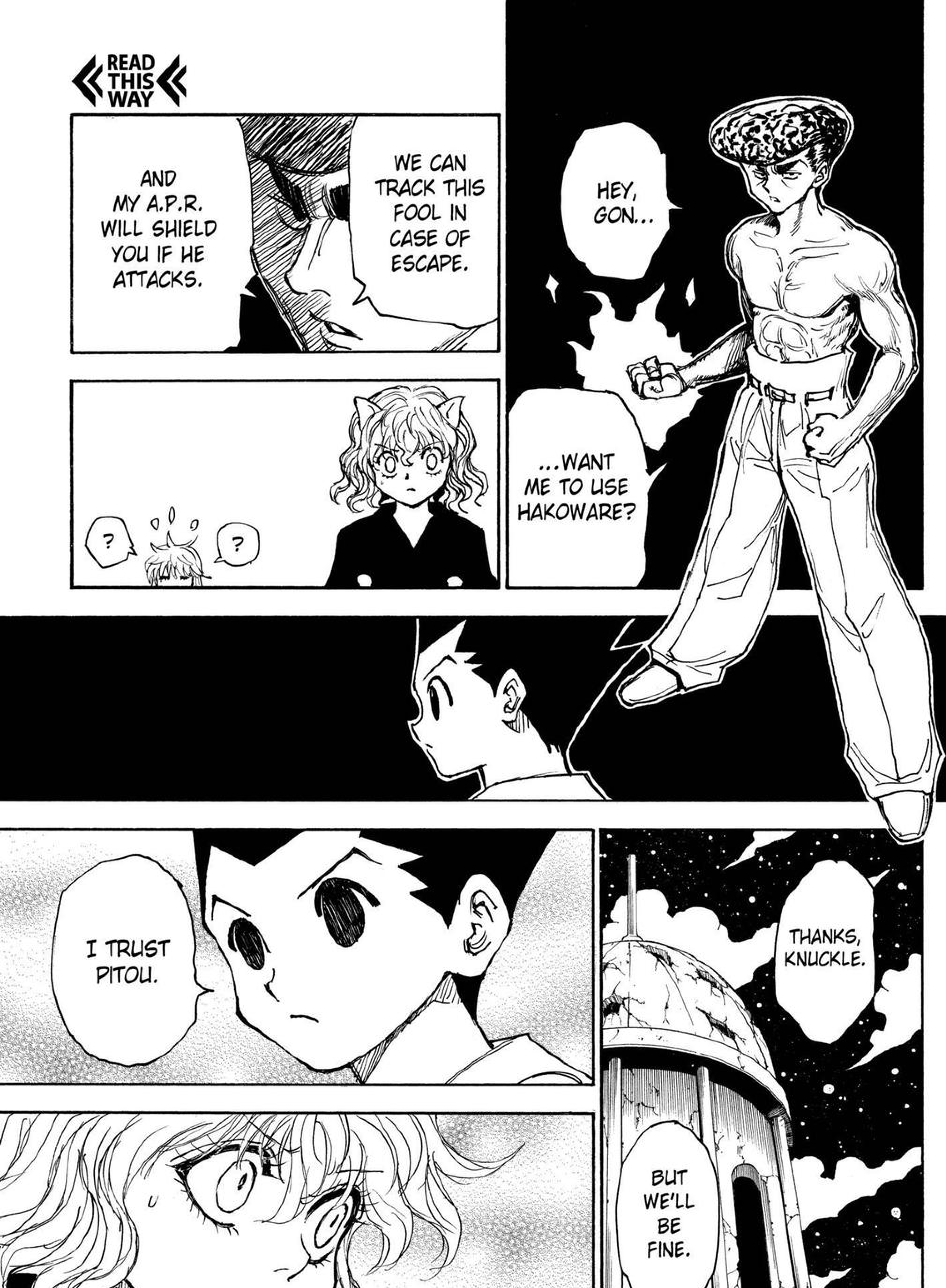

GET UP.
V
M
M
V
M
0:49:57:81

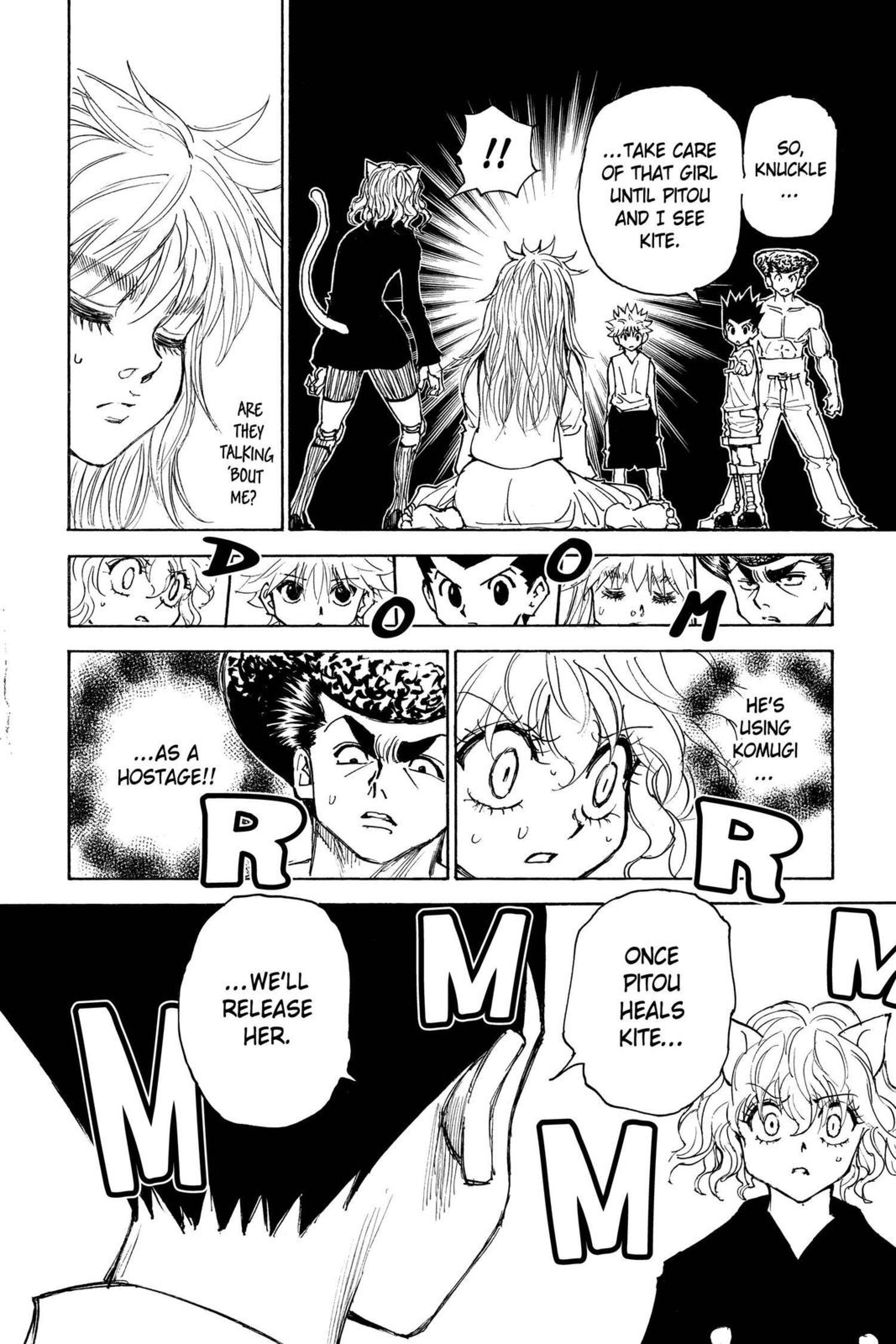

WE'RE GOING TO PEIJIN.
IT'LL BE FASTER FOR US TO RUN.
...
SHP
UH...
...
WHAT...
...HAPPENED TO ME ?
I'D LIKE TO...
PITOU.

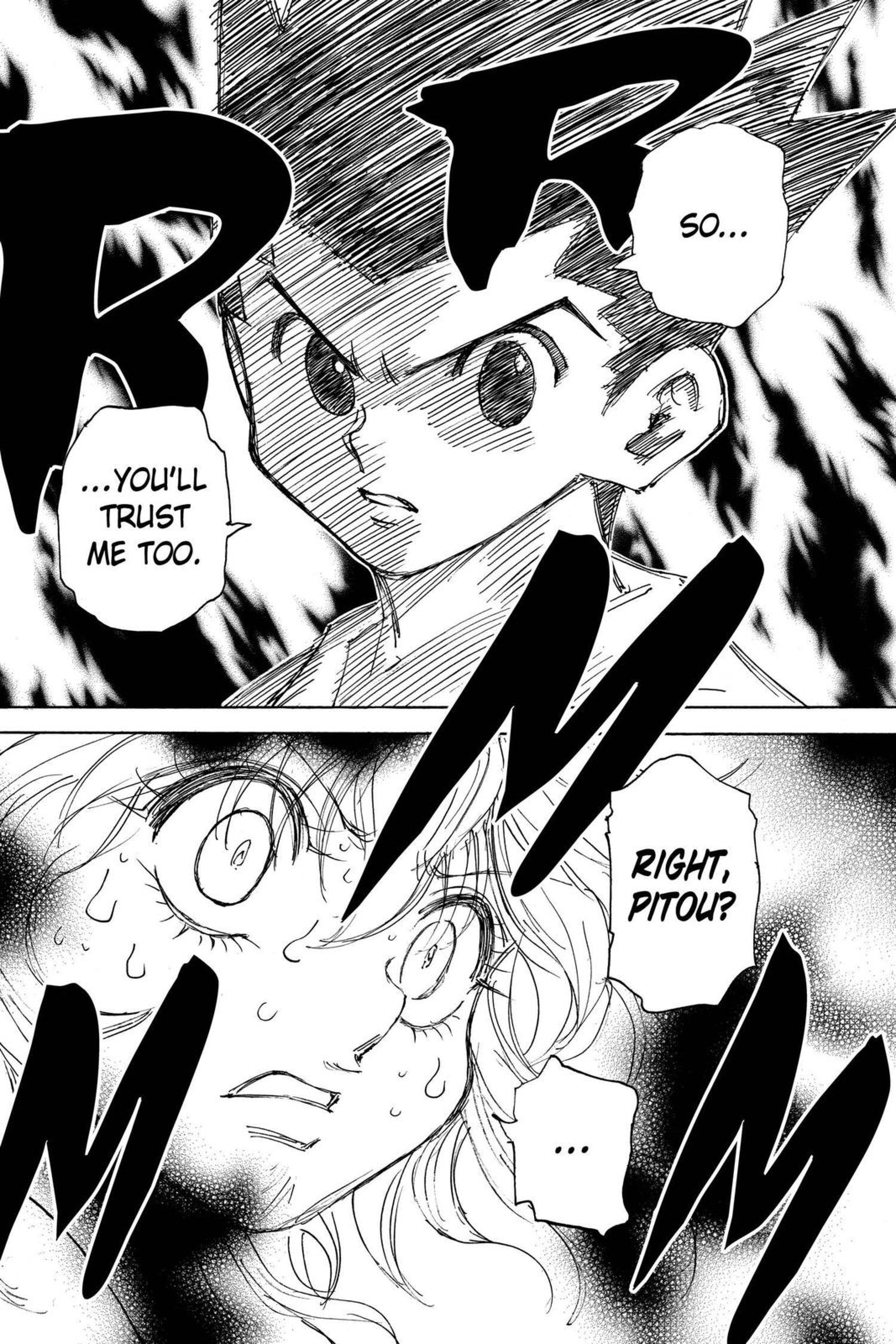

THE NEXT TIME YOU SPEAK OUT OF LINE...
...I'LL KILL HER.
I...I'M SORRY... DID I DO SOMETHIN' WRONG?
UH UH
I DUNNO WHAT'S GOIN' ON...
ALL RIGHT.
LET'S GO.

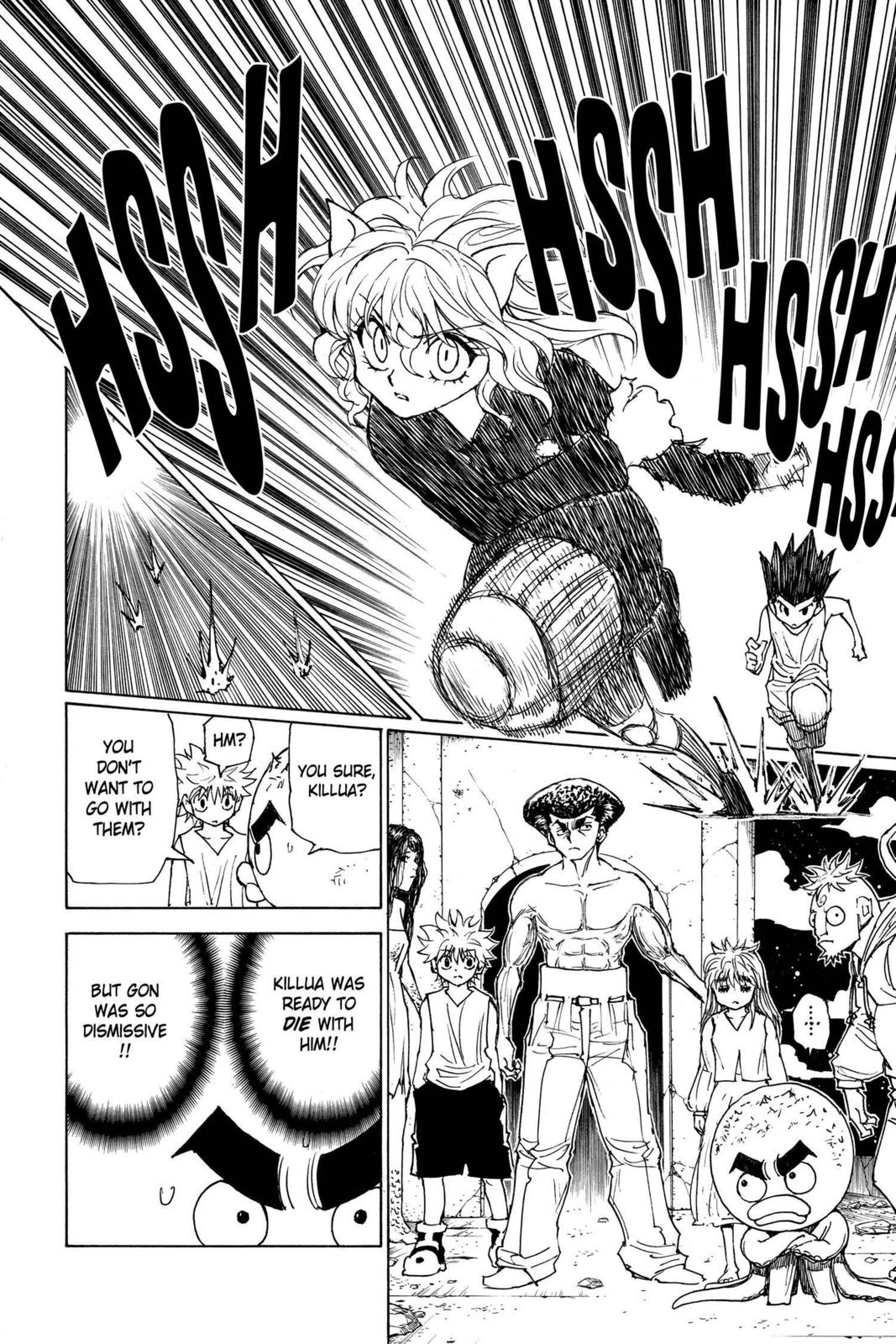

AT THIS DISTANCE, PITOU COULD DECAPITATE GON WITH ONE ARM.
BUT PITOU DIDN'T MOVE.
SENSING GON'S AMAZINGLY SHARPENED INTUITION, PITOU'S INSTINCTS SPOKE.
NOT NOW.
I'LL GET MY CHANCE !!
ANYWHERE ON THE WAY TO PEIJIN...
BUT I HAVE TO GET KOMUGI TO THE KING...
!!
SHF

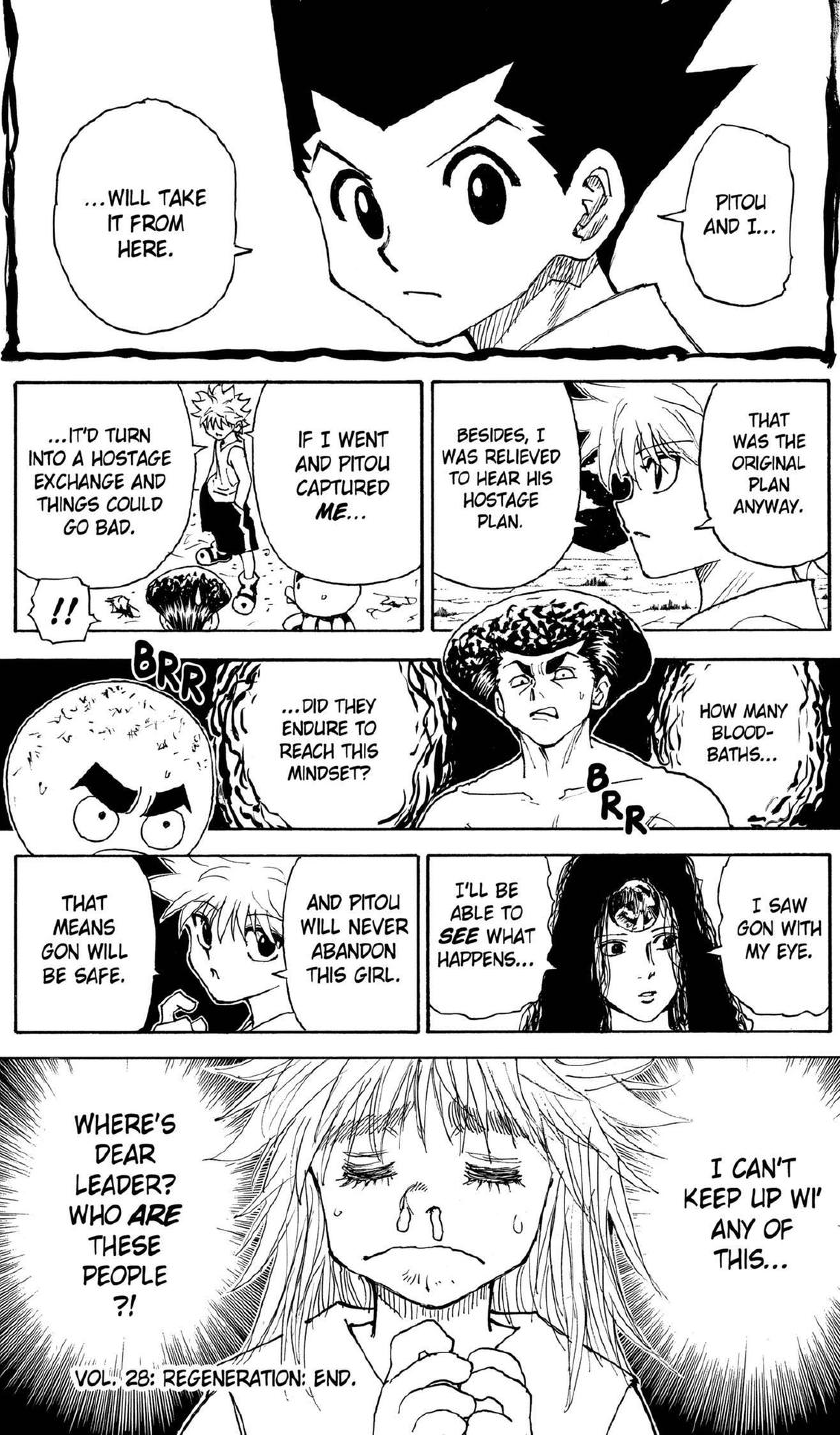
READ THIS WAY


HEY, GON...
...WANT ME TO USE HAKOWARE?
WE CAN TRACK THIS FOOL IN CASE OF ESCAPE.
AND MY A.P.R. WILL SHIELD YOU IF HE ATTACKS.
?
?
THANKS, KNUCKLE.
BUT WE'LL BE FINE.
I TRUST PITOU.


SO, KNUCKLE ...
...TAKE CARE OF THAT GIRL UNTIL PITOU AND I SEE KITE.
!!
ARE THEY TALKING 'BOUT ME?
DOOM
HE'S USING KOMUGI ...
...AS A HOSTAGE!!
RR
ONCE PITOU HEALS KITE...
...WE'LL RELEASE HER.
MMMM


SO...
...YOU'LL TRUST ME TOO.
RRMMMM
RIGHT, PITOU?
...


HSSH
HSSH
HSSH
HSS
…
YOU SURE, KILLUA?
HM?
YOU DON'T WANT TO GO WITH THEM?
KILLUA WAS READY TO *DIE* WITH HIM!!
BUT GON WAS SO DISMISSIVE !!


PITOU AND I...
...WILL TAKE IT FROM HERE.
THAT WAS THE ORIGINAL PLAN ANYWAY.
BESIDES, I WAS RELIEVED TO HEAR HIS HOSTAGE PLAN.
IF I WENT AND PITOU CAPTURED *ME*...
...IT'D TURN INTO A HOSTAGE EXCHANGE AND THINGS COULD GO BAD.
!!
HOW MANY BLOOD-BATHS...
BRR
...DID THEY ENDURE TO REACH THIS MINDSET?
BRR
I SAW GON WITH MY EYE.
I'LL BE ABLE TO *SEE* WHAT HAPPENS...
AND PITOU WILL NEVER ABANDON THIS GIRL.
THAT MEANS GON WILL BE SAFE.
I CAN'T KEEP UP WI' ANY OF THIS...
WHERE'S DEAR LEADER? WHO *ARE* THESE PEOPLE?!

VOL. 28: REGENERATION: END.